

Tōjūrō's Love

And Four Other Plays

BY

KIKUCHI KWAN

TRANSLATED BY

GLENN W. SHAW





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AND FOUR OTHER PLAYS

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BY
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INTRODUCTION

Kikuchi Kwan, the author of the five plays contained in this volume, was born in Takamatsu, a small castle town in the island of Shikoku, in the twenty-second year of Meiji (1889). He is a graduate of the Kyōto Imperial University, where he studied English literature. After leaving the university, he served for a while as reporter on the *Jiji Shimpō*, one of the big Tōkyō dailies, and finally settled down to the life of an author, in which life he has reached the pinnacle of his profession. His published works include several long novels, many collections of short stories and sketches and three volumes of collected plays. He now lives in Zoshigaya, Tōkyō, and writes constantly.

A student of English literature, Kikuchi is said to have been influenced largely by Shaw and Galsworthy. He won his reputation with historical tales, into which he wrote his own humanity. He has since tried his hand at everything but poetry, using for material both stories of the olden days and his own experience. In his work, he adopts a straightforward style and shows himself, while neither idealist nor moralist exactly, a man with a trained conscience and a reasonable and sane view of life. Judging from some of his stories which seem to reflect his own school days, he was always a blunt sort of person, and today when answering in the press somebody who has taken the liberty of having a fling at his universally recognized financial success, he handles the questions involved, including his persecutor's character, with gloveless dispatch.

He takes a high view of his profession and maintains a dignified self-respect in a land where the writer suffers the handicap of a historical prejudice against his calling. Address-

sing a meeting of ladies not long ago, Kikuchi made a plea for recognition of the value of literature along the reasonable lines of its cultural and educative worth and said some rather strong things about a country that does not recognize its writers. He asked where in all Japan a street had ever been named after Chikamatsu, the great playwright of Tokugawa days, an interesting question not necessarily proving lack of appreciation on the part of his countrymen for that literary genius. But a story he added does show in a way what officialdom thinks of Japan's living novelists. When a certain royal visitor from abroad was in Tōkyō not long since, the municipality gave a great theatre party in his honor and invited to it practically all the celebrities of the city, among whom, however, was not to be found a single novelist. Now, inquired Kikuchi scornfully, if the guest of honor had turned to a member of the committee and asked to be shown Japan's greatest novelist, what would he have done? Would he have explained that there was in Tōkyō no novelist worthy the honor of an invitation? In no other great capital in the world, Kikuchi concluded, could that thing have happened.

Of the five plays which compose the Japanese volume, *Tōjūrō no Koi*, the first two were originally published as prose tales and later dramatized by their author. The first, "Tōjūrō's Love," has an interesting history. While a student in Kyōto, Kikuchi wrote it as a drama and sent it up to Tōkyō for publication in the first number of the new magazine, *Shin Shichō*, then just being started by his friends, Akutagawa and Kume, two writers who today share with him a good part of the plaudits of Japanese readers. But they both criticized it unfavorably and urged him to take it back, which he did. Then after keeping it in his desk for three years, he finally made it over into a prose story and published it in the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* six years ago. Almost immediately it was recognized as good stage material, dramatized by Mr. Omori of the Shōchiku Company and

played with great success by Ōsaka's favorite actor, Nakamura Ganjirō. In a recent vote on the most popular of that great *kabuki* actor's plays, it was chosen as second only to the old Chikamatsu favorite, "The Love Suicide of Kamiya Jihei." When Kikuchi saw his own drama, which his friends had advised him to kill, made over again out of his prose story, he naturally wanted to put it back into the form in which his brain had conceived it. The very popular play with which this book begins was the result. It treats of an imaginary incident in the life of a historical figure, Sakata Tōjūrō, the first actor to make of the Japanese play something more than a spectacle. The great Chikamatsu Monzaemon, before he turned to writing the half-chanted half-spoken pieces called *jōruri* for the dolls, wrote plays for him. Sakata's realism died with him because there was among his followers no one with genius enough to keep it alive.

Spurred on by the proof he had had of the dramatic quality of his own stories, Kikuchi next dramatized his prose tale, *Onshū no Kanatani*, and gave the resulting play, the second in this book, the title, *Katakiuchi Ijō*, "Better Than Revenge." It is made in the Kikuchi way out of an old tradition concerning the building of a famous tunnel in the narrow gorge of the beautiful valley in Kyūshū called Yabakei, now famous all over Japan for its charm in maple-leaf time.

After dramatizing his own prose tales, Kikuchi began to write more and more in the dramatic form. The three plays making up the rest of this book were written as they stand for the stage, where the first two immediately won and still maintain their popularity. They both represent that large part of Kikuchi's work which he takes out of every-day experience in Japan. They depict the scenes of his childhood. They contain figures that he knew in Shikoku as a boy. They are true delineations of certain phases of Japanese life and thought among the common people. Kikuchi says of the first, *Okujō no Kyōjōin*, "The Husetop Madman," that it,

rather than such pieces as the two preceding it in this volume, is the sort of play on which he would like to have his dramatic reputation stand. This remark is typical of the man.

Of the other, *Chichi Kaeru*, "The Father Returns," he gives in one of his volumes of essays an account of his being moved to tears at its first stage production in Tōkyō. He had written it out of his own boyhood home. It was his own uncle who really disappeared, and many of the homely little remarks made by the mother in the play were really made by his own mother. Some critic had accused him of stealing the play whole from a foreign author, but he, in response to his own and his friends' emotional reaction to it, ventured to put it in a class of its own beyond anything he had ever read of the kind. This again is typical of the man.

The last piece, *Kiseki*, "The Miracle," is a farce which would at least make a most effective stage. The temple with the ferocious looking God of Hell, "Yama," whom the Japanese call *Emma*, scowling down on sportive young Shukan and the other shaven-headed youths whom the author calls A, B, C and D, unattractive letters which I have retained in their Japanese form as if they were really names, and the brightly dressed maiden, Oben, would offer some striking contrasts. Kikuchi's own comment on the play is that it was once criticized unfavorably by Natsume Sōseki, the modern novelist who, having died in 1916, is still believed by the majority of his countrymen to be their greatest writer since the Restoration, but that he finds something in it he is not willing to throw away and includes it with the other four. This, too, is typical.

The translations which make up this volume have been made at different times during the last four years. "Tōjūrō's Love" and "The Miracle" were done on the blackboard at different sessions of the Karuizawa Summer School, the former being printed afterwards in the English study

magazine, *Eigo Seinen*, and the latter in the English edition of the *Tōkyō Nichi Nichi Shimbun*. "The Housetop Madman" was translated for and first published in the English edition of the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun*. "The Father Returns" was translated for and first published in the English edition of the *Tōkyō Nichi Nichi Shimbun*. "Better Than Revenge" was translated for this volume and is here printed for the first time.

I have here to thank the *Eigo Seinen*, the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* and the *Tōkyō Nichi Nichi Shimbun* (of which the English edition is now defunct), for permission to reprint the translations that appeared in their publications respectively and Mr. Kikuchi for his kind permission to translate and publish his writings in English. To my colleagues, also, of the Yamaguchi Higher Commercial School and the *Ōsaka Foreign Language School* am I greatly indebted for help around curves where my occidental brain tended to skid on oriental idioms. I may add that in these translations it has been my constant aim to keep as close to literalness as the natural requirements of my own tongue would allow.

GLENN W. SHAW.

Ōsaka, September 27, 1925.

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TŌJŪRŌ'S LOVE

A ONE-ACT PLAY IN THREE SCENES

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SAKATA TÔJÛRÔ, chief actor at the Miyako Mandayu Theatre, popularly styled "The Premier Artist of the Three Harbors."

KIRINAMI SENJU, a handsome young actor, chief player of female parts.

NAKAMURA SHIRÔGORÔ	}	stars at the same theatre.
ARASHI SANJÛRÔ		
SAWAMURA CHOJÛRÔ		

SODEZAKI GENJI	}	players of young women's parts at the same theatre.
KIRINAMI ÔYO		
SAKATA ICHIYA		

ONOGAWA UGENJI	}	players of young men's parts at the same theatre.
FUJITA KOHEIJI		

SENDAI YAGOSHICHI, comedian at the same theatre.

HATTORI JIRÔEMON, villain at the same theatre.

KANEKO KICHIZAEMON, playwright at the same theatre.

MANDAYUZA-NO-WAKADAYU, owner of the Mandayu Theatre.
Stage Manager.

Two or three Stage Assistants.

Many Players of young men's parts and Catamites.

Many Maids of the Munekiyo House.

OKAJI, wife to the manager of the Munekiyo, a beautiful matron nearly forty years of age.

Two or three supernumeraries.

TIME—*About the tenth year of the Genroku Period.*

PLACE—*Nakajima at Shijō-gawara in Kyōto.*

TŌJŪRŌ'S LOVE

SCENE I

[*A large hall in the Munekiyo tea-house attached to the Miyako Mandayu Theatre at Nakajima in Shijō. The evening of a day late in the second month. A get-together banquet of the cast for the play to be offered in the third month is being held by the actors of the Miyako Mandayu Theatre. Many silver candlesticks, with great candles blazing in them, stand in rows. In front of an ornamental alcove up-stage, SAKATA TŌJŪRŌ sits composedly on a bordered cushion of damask silk. He is a handsome, light-complexioned man with his hair done up in the form of a bamboo tea-whisk. He wears a gown of mouse-colored silk crape beneath, and above, a haori of black habutae with Kaga crests of wee little double-faced dolls painted on in bright colors, and, bound around his waist, a broad sash of Chinese brown of special dye. To the right of TŌJŪRŌ sits KIRINAMI SENJU, the company's chief player of female parts. He is dressed in a double gown of purple silk crape over a wadded dress of white silk and, with his velvet haori and purple field hat, is as beautiful as a very woman. To the right and left of them sit in a*

line NAKAMURA SHIRŌGORŌ, ARASHI SANJŪRŌ, SAWA-MURA CHOJŪRŌ, SODEZAKI GENJI, KIRINAMI ŌYO, SAKATA ICHIYA, ONOGAWA UGENJI, FUJITA KOHEIJI, SENDAI YAGOSHICHI, HATTORI JIRŌEMON and KANEKO KICHIZAEMON. *At the ends of the line sit in attendance the pretty youths who play the parts of young men and the catamites. MANDAYUZA-NO-WAKADAYU goes about among the cups and trays serving the banqueters.*

When the curtain opens, while one handsome young actor of youths' parts beats a hand-drum, a quintette of them sings the following ditty to the tune of Ryūtatsu Bushi:

If you make a vow with one,
Vow lightly and endure to the last.
See the leaves of the maple—
Do the light leaves fall
Or the deep leaves fall?
The deep leaves all fall first.

The song ended, the actors applaud with hand-clapping. A sliding paper door at the left opens and a maid of the Munekiyo comes in with a letter-box labeled with a red tag.]

Maid. A letter has come for Tōjūrō Sama.

Wakadayu [taking it from her half-way]. It seems to be an urgent matter. [*Hands the box to Tōjūrō.*]

Tōjūrō [taking it]. Oh, it does, indeed, look

like urgent business. I'll just look at it. Please all excuse me. What, what! "Renshi Dono, from Sorin." Why, it's a letter from Chikamatsu Sama! [*Reads it mumblingly and at the end raises his voice.*] "Because I, too, am worried about this next piece, I send you a line thus by speedy courier. If you are bested by Shōchō Dono, it will mean not only your own defeat but a disgrace to the drama of Kyōto, the original drama. I, with all my heart, beseech that you make every effort to work out your plans." [*Thinks for a moment and reads again.*] "A disgrace to the drama of Kyōto,"—um, I'll never be bested! [*Laughs.*] But this great worry of Chikamatsu's is all out of love for this Tōjūrō.

Senju [*like a woman even in his speech*]. Yes, indeed, they say even the great Chikamatsu Sama himself racked his brains for three days and three nights over this piece. Truly, his kindness must not be left unheeded.

Yagoshichi [*with the grandiloquent gesture of a comedian*]. That's why this is the unique paramour drama of all time. It's a plan to make Tōjūrō Sama, who is the greatest rake on the Japanese stage, by a complete change of spirit, into a paramour. If whoring is the love of spring nights, this is the love of violently hot midsummer. It's love so fierce that it scorches the body.

Shirōgorō. Rather than the love of a summer's

day, it's the love of a terrible winter's night. It's life-risking love.

Sanjurō. Life-risking love it surely is. If the worst comes to the worst, it's the terrible life-risking love that gets a man crucified at Awataguchi.

Genji. Yesterday as I was passing through Miyagawa-cho, two merchants who looked like dealers in perfumeries went before me talking together in loud voices. They were saying eagerly that Tōjūrō Sama, familiar with all the tricks of making love to loose women, would surely surprise his spectators with some clever handling of the part of the paramour.

Chojurō. Even the nobles who say that it's somewhat satiating to see even Tōjūrō in the paper clothes of a prodigal every year, will surely be surprised at this new piece.

Jirōemon. And when I think of being able with this piece to blow away like a bubble this Nakamura Shichisaburō who has been playing to full houses at the Hanzaemon Theatre ever since spring, I'm delighted. When I think of being able to pull back to the Mandayu the swarms of spectators that have been attracted to the Hanzaemon, I'm overjoyed.

Shirōgorō. All the same, Tōjūrō Sama's worry over just this new piece is probably not of the ordinary sort. The old dramatic plots of the ins and outs of sodomy, of harloting, love intrigue and burlesque, all

the established things, have just about been upset by this new plot of Monzaemon Sama's. In addition, with the details about the paper-hanger, well known in Kyōto, put in it true to the life, how can this piece fail?

Wakadayu [growing proud]. It's as Shirōgorō Sama says. [*Crawling up in front of TōJŪRŌ.*] Please drink another cup to your coming success. You're the premier performer of Japan in harloting parts, and you doubtless have some special ideas about the intricacies of unlawful love, too, haven't you? [*Laughs.*]

[TōJŪRŌ, from the time he hears the actors' conversation, begins gradually to evince uneasiness. He takes the cup offered him by WAKADAYU and drains it in silence.]

Senju [noticing TōJŪRŌ's uneasiness and speaking a little soothingly]. Truly, as *Wakadayu* says, Tōjūrō Sama must have some ideas about this exactly fixed in his mind. If we simply depend on him and work like puppets, all will go well.

Wakadayu [as if strengthened by SENJU's intervention]. Compared with our new piece, such things as this "Asamagatake, the Harlot," which is drawing great crowds, are foolish and pitiful affairs. Nobody but Monzaemon Sama would think of writing a play about a paramour. Still Sakata Sama must have had some experience of this extraordinary

sort of love, too. [*Laughs.*]

Tōjūrō [*all the while grows more and more uneasy and distressed. In a huff, as if injured by WAKADAYU's last words*]. Never. I'm lustful by nature, but I've never yet been intimate with any man's wife.

[WAKADAYU, *having that which he had said for the amusement of the party attacked in earnest, becomes sober and silent.*]

Senju [*again meditatively*]. Indeed, it's as Sakata Sama says. Even this Senju has never been intimate with any man's woman. [*All the other actors laugh together.*]

Yagoshichi. That's the same with everybody. It would be different if there were a drouth of women, but better than the dangerous love which woos other men's women, there are the singing girls of Miyagawa-cho, the young widows of Muro-machi, the procuresses of Gion, the townsmen's daughters of Shijō and Gojō and ladies suitable for the companions of actors as the stars for number. [*Laughs.*]

Genji. Yes, but they say best of all stolen sweets, next best a concubine, next a maid servant, then a wife. The flavor of stolen pleasures is a special flavor, so another man's woman is not a thing to be thrown lightly away.

Chojūrō. Hello, it looks as if you've had experience.

Genji. Not I. Still, if men feared crucifixion, reports of paramours would die out of the world. But that they have not is proven by Osan and Mōemon in this play. The ways of love are inexplicable. [*Laughs.*]

Wakadayu [*trying to hide his own apprehensions*]. The party's melancholy. Come, you youngsters, dance a group-dance.

Three or four Young Actors. Aye. [*They get up and begin to dance.*]

[TŌJŪRŌ is silent and seems to be trying to devise in private some plan for the play and, while the attention of the company is drawn to the dance, gets up stealthily. He opens the sliding doors up-stage and goes quietly out into the corridor. The young actors go on dancing. The thump of the hand-drum becomes fast and furious. The actors, too, become light-hearted.]

Yagoshichi [*getting up with a funny motion*]. I'll join the dancers, too.

Shirōgorō. Beautiful youths and the bald-headed Yagoshichi Dono! This is a superb combination. I'll beat the hand-drum.

[YAGOSHICHI dances with the youths with comic postures. In the confusion of their united laughter, the stage turns round.]

SCENE II

[*The detached parlor at the Munekiyo. To the left, a part of the bed of the Kamo River is visible. To the right, there is a long corridor leading to the main building. The glow of a silk night-lamp illumines the beautiful furnishings witchingly.*

When the curtain opens, TŌJŪRŌ, with folded arms, walks in along the corridor. From time to time he stops and thinks. He leans against a pillar and thinks. Again while walking two or three steps, he tries to fix simple poses. Finally he reaches the detached parlor. Opening the sliding door, he makes sure that no one is there and goes quietly in. He takes from the bosom of his garment a copy of his lines.]

Tōjūrō [as he reads the lines, trying various poses]. "Having reached this stage, though I suffer the pains of fire and water—" [Throwing away his part as if unable to hit upon a plan, he falls to thinking. Standing up, he tries the business of taking a woman's hand. Opening the part again, he gazes at it fixedly.] "Though I die, if it be with you, I care not—" [Again throwing away his lines hopelessly, he takes his head in his hands and falls into deep thought. Changing his mind, he gets up and tries moving about without words. As if finally unable to work out the business, he sits down with his hands on the mats behind him and mumbles something in a low sigh.

At last as if giving up the attempt for the time, he reaches out and, taking from the alcove an arm-rest, puts his right elbow on it and lies down.

For a while nothing happens. The thumping of the hand-drum and a larger drum in the great hall of the main building is faintly audible. TŌJŪRŌ closes his eyes quietly. All at once somebody is heard in the corridor. TŌJŪRŌ opens his eyes a little, puts his lines over his face again and pretends to be asleep. She who appears in the corridor is OKAJI, the wife of the manager of the Munekiyo. She draws near with rapid steps, and, without a word of warning, slides open the door. She sees TŌJŪRŌ and is startled.]

Okaji. Oh, is it Tō Sama? I was very rude. Please forgive me. [She starts to leave at once. Suddenly, as if she has first noticed.] Really, my maids are very careless. You mustn't lie thus in a chilly place like this and catch cold. Come, I'll throw a cover over you. [Goes to take bedding out of a closet in one corner of the room.]

Tōjūrō [when he discovers that it is the wife of the innkeeper, sitting up and correcting his attitude]. Oh, is it the lady of the house? You're very kind.

Okaji. Not at all. Come, lie down and rest.

[TŌJŪRŌ suddenly looks at OKAJI. The traces of her shaved eyebrows are beautiful on her slender and pure white face. TŌJŪRŌ's eyes, which were at first fascinated, gradually become sinister. OKAJI, not

noticing at all the strange tenseness that has come over TōJŪRŌ, lightly throws a habutae quilt over him from behind.]

Okaji. Come, please rest. When I go back, I'll have the maids bring you some water. [*Starts to go out in a natural way.*]

[*TōJŪRŌ's eyes shine more and more brightly. He has been watching OKAJI's departure intently, and as if on a sudden impulse, calls after her.*]

Tōjūrō. Okaji Dono. Okaji Dono. Wait a moment.

Okaji [*a little surprised, but naïvely*]. Have you some business with me? [*Kneels.*]

Tōjūrō [*throwing the quilt off behind him*]. Only there's something I'd like to ask your opinion on, so won't you come a little nearer?

Okaji [*hesitates as if a little uneasy and does not come very near. But she speaks naïvely as before.*] What's your business that you're so serious? [*Laughs softly.*]

Tōjūrō [*in a low but strong voice*]. There are circumstances I just want you to listen to. Come a little nearer.

Okaji. With Tō Sama putting on a serious face like this, he must be up to some trick. [*Coming nearer*]. I've come this far; what do you want?

Tōjūrō [*absolutely serious*]. Okaji Dono, tonight won't you hear Tōjūrō's confession? There's some-

thing I've hidden from you for twenty years. You must listen to this tonight. Looking back, it's an old story. It was the autumn of the year when you were sixteen and I was twenty, but you probably don't forget how we two danced together in a temporary booth in the river bed at the time of the Gion festival. [*Looks fixedly into OKAJI's face.*]

Okaji [*a little dreamily, as if thinking of the olden days*]. Ah, that time!

Tōjūrō. That was the first time I ever saw you. Before that I had often heard people speak of Okaji Dono, the singing girl of Miyagawa-cho, to whom not even the most beautiful male player of women's parts could hold a candle, but when I first saw you, you were far more beautiful than they said. Even I, proud as I was of my looks, when I danced with you, felt that I was thrown into the shade. [*Fastens his eyes on the floor.*]

[OKAJI, *her face red as fire, hangs her head and says nothing.*]

Tōjūrō [*desperately tense*]. Ever since then I've been convinced that you're the most beautiful woman in the world.

[OKAJI, *looking down, hangs her head lower and lower and trembles slightly.*]

Tōjūrō [*gazes sharply with calm and cold eyes that could by no possibility be taken for those of a lover upon OKAJI, who cannot even lift her face, as if*

he would look her through and through, while his voice alone trembles with fierce passion]. At the time I fell in love with you at first sight I was always thinking to tell you at the earliest opportunity, but being a young player and the rules of my chief being strict, I could not do as I would. While I contented myself in the belief that in the end there was nothing to do but bide my time, with my heart alone burning with the fires of love, you who were hardly twenty became the beloved of Seibei Dono, the master of this house. The bitterness of that time, when I recall it even now, is so great that it seems it must tear my breast asunder. [*While saying this, TŌJŪRŌ writhes as if he cannot sit still. But his eyes alone glitter coldly and he fastens his terrible gaze on the woman, taking in everything from her breathing to her attitude.*]

[OKAJI *half raises her face as if a little composed. Having once gone pale, it gradually grows slightly red with the reaction. Her eyes burn like fire.*]

Tōjūrō [*goes on, his voice alone trembling with fierce passion*]. Though I've controlled my heart with all my might, knowing that to love another's wife is wrong, the love of an ordinary man can't be suppressed. Since hearing about you and seeing you, during twenty long years I've never forgotten you for a single day. [*Acting more consummately than when on the stage, and mingling the terror and*

uneasiness of one wooing another's wife, he creeps near the woman, who is terrified like a little bird.]

But, though I'm passionate, I've always controlled my heart, which burns both day and night, that it might not commit the sin of loving another's wife, but this year I'm forty-five. Man's span is well over. When I wonder in what world and to whom I can tell such a love as this, such a love as this which I have borne for twenty long years, if I breathe not a word of it to you, my heart is in this disordered state which verges on madness. Listen, Okaji Dono, if you're sorry for Tōjūrō, speak just one compassionate word, please! Okaji Dono. *[Writhing madly, he slides near her. But his eyes alone are clear as the blade of a sword. OKAJI bursts out crying and falls on her face.]*

Tōjūrō *[looks fixedly at OKAJI lying there crying. A cold expression plays about his mouth. But, despite that, his voice and his movements are filled with the passion of a man mad with love]*. Listen, Okaji Dono. Hearing Tōjūrō's real undeceiving heart, don't you pity his love? Don't you pity the love he's borne for twenty long years? If you don't, you're an unfeeling woman. *[OKAJI only sobs and does not answer. Both are still and some time passes. The voices of plovers attracted by the light, which sound like the clipping of silver scissors, are heard near at hand. As if sneering at himself,*

TōJŪRŌ *smiles a melancholy smile.*] I've spoken most rudely. But you're truly a strong woman to treat coldly the fierce love of this Tōjūrō. Even I who am the peerless lover of the Japanese stage, when I come to you, am thrown off like some nonsensical fellow. [*Laughs.*]

Okaji [*suddenly lifts her face. It wears a desperate expression. In a low and weakening voice.*] Then, Tō Sama, all you've just said is sincere, is it?

Tōjūrō [*in spite of himself desperately pale*]. How could I make sport of you? Since I'm talking to another man's wife, mine is a life-risking love. [*He is squatting and half rising, and his knees tremble slightly. OKAJI seems to have made a desperate resolve, and taking one glance at his face with her burning eyes, she suddenly blows out the light in the silk night-lamp beside her. In the darkness, a terrible hesitation and silence comes between the two. OKAJI, all atremble, awaits his approach. TōJŪRŌ himself rolls his eyes upward, and his legs tremble slightly. Finally he stands up. He walks toward OKAJI. She is desperate. But TōJŪRŌ slips past her and gropes his way out into the corridor.*]

Okaji [*perceiving that he is about to go*]. Tō Sama! Tō Sama! [*As she cries thus softly, she follows and tries to take hold of him. TōJŪRŌ, seeing that she is following, slides the door shut behind him.*

OKAJI *clings to the door and falls writhing and weeping. TōJŪRŌ, affrighted, runs rapidly away like a beast. The voices of plovers are heard mingling with OKAJI's sobs.*]

SCENE III

[*One day a week later than the events in Scene II. Behind the scenes at the Miyako Mandayu Theatre. Upstage are seen the entrances to the dressing-rooms of the actors. The most prominent among them is that of TōJŪRŌ hung with a curtain bearing an open-plum-blossom crest. In the very middle is the room of the property men. To the left is a door leading out to the stage of the Mandayu Theatre. It is hung with a light blue curtain. On the stage out there the play seems not yet to have opened and the music of drums, hand-drums and flutes is heard intermittently. When the curtain opens, five or six actors and supers hurry busily back and forth. The property men go to the actors' rooms carrying costumes, swords, etc.*]

MANDAYUZA NO WAKADAYU *comes out of TōJŪRŌ's room. He bumps into the Stage Manager and greets him.*]

Stage Manager. Congratulations. This morning again before the sixth hour bell had sounded for opening, the entrance was jammed with waiting people.

Wakadayu. It's fine. Truly it's Tōjūrō! The women of the gay quarters say his interpretation of the paramour is absolutely faultless.

Stage Manager. At this, the people of the Hanzaemon Theatre must be open-mouthed with surprise. With this popularity, we're bound to run, not a hundred days, but good two hundred.

Wakadayu. Anyway it's fine. All be careful behind the scenes. That nothing untoward may happen, I mean. At just such times of great crowds, such calamities as fires and robberies are likely to occur.

Stage Manager. Yes, yes, I understand.

[*They separate and go to right and left. A man who looks like a clerk comes with an apprentice through the entrance at the left.*]

Clerk [*calling to the Stage Manager*]. Ah, I say, I say. Where's Tōjūrō Sama's room?

Stage Manager. Where are you from? His room's just over there.

Clerk. I'm a clerk from the Bizen House in Muro-machi, Shijō.

Stage Manager. Oh, are you a messenger from the great magnate of Muromachi? Come! Go right in! It's the second room from the left.

Clerk. Sure enough. The plum crest's on it, isn't it?

[*The clerk goes into Tōjūrō's room.* NAKAMURA

SHIRŌGORŌ, *dressed for the part of the paper-hanger Ishun, and SODEZAKI GENJI, in the part of the maid Otama, come out of the room next to TŌJŪRŌ's.*]

Shirōgorō [taking GENJI by the sleeve and posing a little]. I simply can't make the part where I trifle with you go well at all. It's been three days, and I haven't got the business yet. Yesterday when I begged Tōjūrō Dono to help me, he said it was most important to make up one's own business. Come, before the curtain opens, won't you practise it with me once more?

Genji. Gladly. As often as you like. Tōjūrō Dono always scolds hard when you ask him for business. "All make up your own business," is a fixed answer with him.

Shirōgorō. Yes, the year before last when Yamashita Kyōemon was going down to Yedo and came to take farewell of Tōjūrō Dono, he said, "I've made you my model in everything and in consequence have advanced greatly in my art," and, as usual, Tōjūrō Dono frowned a little and quickly said, seriously and without smiling, "He who mimics another is certain to fall below the one he mimics. You, too, work with all your heart at making your own plans." Kyōemon's chagrin on that occasion still makes me laugh whenever I think of it.

Genji. Let's try to get our business done before we're scolded by Tōjūrō Dono.

Shirōgorō [*suddenly assuming a stage pose*]. Here, I'll not let you go. Jealousy goes with wives as pepper with macaroni, so I don't care. What though I be pinched tea-brown, not to mention purple, all over my body, if it's for your sake, I don't care.

Genji [*assuming a stage pose in response*]. Do what you like. For I'll tell Osan Sama. Oh, Osan Sama! Osan Sama!

Shirōgorō [*continuing to pose*]. Come, you're noisy. Besides, Osan has the mouth of a crocodile, and, speaking of mouths, mouths and mouths— [*Suddenly changing back into an actor again.*] This part simply won't go right.

[*Enter down stage a young town girl conducted by a procuress from a theatre tea-house.*]

Procuress. Oh, *Genji* Sama. We've come just in time. Look here, this is the daughter of the proprietor of the Omi House of Higashi-no-Toin, of whom I spoke to you a little recently.

Genji [*looking regretfully at SHIRŌGORŌ*]. The curtain's just about to open, so please wait till another time.

Procuress. Really, you speak heartlessly. Please exchange a few words with her, since she's been so kind as to come here back behind the scenes.

Genji [*to the girl nervously*]. Really it's very kind of you to come. [*The girl also is ashamed and*

hangs her head in silence.]

Procuress. Come, just come to my tea-house a moment. Just a moment, for it'll take no time.

Genji. I can't. It'll open in a minute now.

Procuress. It'll never open yet. Come, come on. [*Seizes GENJI'S hand and leads him out left with the girl.*]

[*SENDAI YAGOSHICHI, in the part of Sukeuemon, enters from the right with three or four other players costumed as apprentice clerks.*]

First Player. The girls of these days must be watched. They fall in love with actors and come boldly even into the greenroom.

Second Player. All the same, Sodezaki Dono's a lucky man. It's probably far from distasteful to him to be loved like that by a town virgin. [*Laughs.*]

Third Player. Anyway, that's the roar of the house. There's such a jam, it seems the theatre'll burst.

Shirōgorō [*who, having lost his partner, has been standing absent-mindedly*]. I'd like to have Shōchō of Yedo see this crowd.

Yagoshichi. Yes, indeed. Compared with this piece, such things as Asama-ga-take are child's play.

Shirōgorō. The smoke that rises from Asama-ga-take is gradually thinning out. [*Laughs.*]

[KIRINAMI SENJU, *in the part of the beautiful Osan, comes quietly out of his room. He is accompanied by an attendant.*]

Yagoshichi. Yesterday I chanced to hear a rumor somewhere that after Tōjūrō Dono had worried greatly over a plan for this piece, he made love to the wife of a certain tea-house keeper and arrived at the feelings and business of the paramour, but is that true?

Shirōgorō. I can't say whether it is or not, but probably Senju Dono's heard. Is the report true?

Senju. I've heard people telling such a story, too. Tō Sama keeps his mouth shut and doesn't say anything. But that night of the get-together banquet at the Munekiyo, he was distressed about a plan for the play and left his seat in the midst of the hilarity, and it was after you had succumbed to drink and gone away to other rooms, that he came back into the banqueting hall, pale and breathless, drained three or four big cups of *sake* one after another and said, "Senju Dono, don't worry. I've got the idea for the play." He wore a fearful expression that made him almost unrecognizable, and that night— [*As SENJU inclines his head to one side, he notices OKAJI of the Munekiyo entering stealthily through the door at the left and stops talking.*]

Yagoshichi [*in the manner of the comedian*]. Hello, hello, it's Okaji Dono. Welcome. I'd just

like to ask if you aren't she on whom Tōjūrō Dono practised for this piece?

Okaji [*tense, but modestly*]. What? Your question's like a club from out a thicket.

Yagoshichi [*still the comedian*]. The story goes that Tōjūrō Dono, to practise for this play, made pretended love to a man's wife and, when he saw her yielding, ran away. Haven't you some idea who she was?

Okaji [*modest and composed*]. Though but in pretence, to be the recipient of Tōjūrō's love but once is the supreme desire of a woman's life.

Yagoshichi. Good, I've been put down.
[*Laughs.*]

Senju [*a little soothingly*]. Really if it were not you whose reputation for chastity has always been high, suspicion would fasten on you first of all. Have you some business in the greenroom? Please come right in.

Okaji. Yes, it's a message for Arashi Sangorō Sama from a guest.

Senju. Oh. Come, please come right in.

[OKAJI makes a bow and goes past them. As she starts toward the dressing rooms, she comes face to face with TŌJŪRŌ, who is coming out of his room. They both start momentarily. OKAJI gives him a slight greeting with her eyes and passes on. TŌJŪRŌ stares for a moment after her retreating form.]

Shirōgorō [*seeing TōJŪRŌ coming out*]. Just now we were talking about you. Have you heard the rumor about this play that's gone abroad both on the stage and off?

Tōjūrō [*preserving the authority of the head of the company*]. Not a word.

Yagoshichi. It's queer that you whom it's about shouldn't have heard.

Senju. It's better not to tell Tō Sama.

Yagoshichi. Though we don't, he'll hear it some time. Tōjūrō Sama, listen. It's rumored that to get ideas for this piece, you made love to a man's wife.

Tōjūrō [*laughing*]. That's a silly inquiry. When I took care of Arashi Sangorō's wounded warrior some time ago, people said noisily that I was too skilful and it was noised abroad that Tōjūrō understood surgery. It's the art of an actor to make it look as if he's had experience, whether he has or not. It's art when he plays the part of an oil seller, whether he's had the experience or not, to show the feelings of an oil seller. If a man couldn't play the part of a paramour without experience as a paramour, he couldn't play the part of a thief without experience as a thief. He couldn't play the part of a noble on the stage unless he had experienced being a noble. It's a silly report. The silly report of the scandal-loving people of Kyōto. It's impossible to say what

trouble the passing on of this report might bring to the wives of those who are round about Tōjūrō. Stamp it out without fail.

Senju. Indeed, it's as Tō Sama says.

Yagoshichi. That's just like Tōjūrō. Quite right, to be sure. If a man must have actual experience to play a part, an actor can't really be an actor until he's once been everything from regent to footman. Quite right, indeed.

Clerk [coming out of TōJŪRŌ's room]. Then, I'll take my leave.

Tōjūrō. Thanks for your trouble. Please give the magnate my best thanks.

[The clerk goes out with the apprentice. It seems that the curtain is about to open; the scene shifters and property men go busily back and forth.]

Tōjūrō [turning to SENJU]. Senju Dono. In that scene in the dark when we first take hands, can't you show a little more excitement, for at such a time a woman gets more desperately mad than a man.

Senju [obediently]. All right. I understand. Today the dramatist Monzaemon will be watching, so I'll put all my heart into it.

Tōjūrō. Well, in a moment the curtain will open.

[He takes SENJU's hand and starts to go. Suddenly the greenroom is in an uproar. The scene

shifters and subordinate actors come running to the actors' rooms shouting, "Suicide! Suicide! A woman suicide!"]

Stage Manager [running in excitedly]. Ah, you mustn't make a noise. If the spectators get excited, the stage will be confused. Be quiet, be quiet. [*Follows to the back of the stage.*]

Yagoshichi [still a little frivolously, like a comedian]. Hello, that's odd. Suicide, and a woman's suicide. Where there oughtn't to be a single female cat behind the scenes.

Senju [likewise surprised]. A woman suicide! What, a woman suicide!

[TōJŪRŌ, as if he has guessed the truth, turns a little pale and is silent. Scene shifters and property men come carrying the dead body of OKAJI. On all sides arise the words, It's Okaji of the Munekiyo.]

Senju [running up startled]. What! The matron of the Munekiyo! [*Looks round at TōJŪRŌ as if he has suddenly guessed. TōJŪRŌ looks away as if to avoid SENJU's eyes.*]

Yagoshichi. Indeed, it's the matron of the Munekiyo. A single dagger blow beneath her breast.

Shirōgorō. She was talking here just a moment ago, and now in a wink the end. Tōjūrō Sama, look; I don't know the circumstances, but this is an exceptionally fine ending for a woman.

[As if drawn to it, TōJŪRŌ walks up to the body

and stares fixedly at it. He says nothing.]

Wakadayu [runs in panting]. What is it? What is it? What is it? What, a woman suicide! Oh, it's the matron of the Munekiyo. There may have been some reason, but, anyway, the greenroom of the Mandayu Theatre is no place for suicides.

Senju. Indeed, there's no need to come here to die. [*Suddenly looks at TōJŪRŌ's face and falls silent.*]

Yogoshichi. If this inauspicious thing becomes known abroad, it may injure the present great popularity of our piece.

Wakadayu. Indeed, that worries me. All please refrain from speaking of it to others.

Tōjūrō [has been staring at the body in silence, but suddenly changes his mood]. What's there to worry about? Could the popularity of Tōjūrō's art be injured by such a thing as the life of a single woman? [*Taking SENJU's hand.*] Come, Senju Dono, the stage.

Senju [gently, like a real woman]. All right.

[*TōJŪRŌ hurries straight off for the stage, but turns round again, takes one look at the dead body and finally, making up his mind, goes off. Simultaneously, the wooden clappers to open the play sound and the curtain falls slowly.*]

BETTER THAN REVENGE

A Dramatization in Three Acts (with Six Scenes) of the
Author's Own Prose Tale, ONSHU NO
KANATA NI

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

NAKAGAWA SABUROBYOE, a feudatory of the Shogun, having a mansion at Tawara Machi in Asakusa. Aged about 50.

NAKAGAWA JITSUNOSUKE, Saburobyoe's son and heir. In Act I, aged 4 or 5. In Act III, aged 26 or 27.

ICHIKURŌ, in Act I, a retainer in the Nakagawa family. In Act II, a robber. In Act III, a priest.

OYUMI, in Act I, Saburobyoe's favorite concubine. In Act II, Ichikurō's wife.

A Young Married Couple traveling.

GONSAKU, a hostler.

Stonecutters, Peasants, a Peasant Girl, etc.

TIME—*The Yedo Period. The action takes place between the year periods Enkyō and Anei inclusive.*

PLACE—*Act I, Yedo. Act II, in the Kiso Mountains. Act III, Yabakei (for convenience, employing the nomenclature of a later period).*

CONCERNING COSTUMES AND PROPERTIES. *Such gaudy brand new costumes as are seen on the display figures at dry-goods stores are to be avoided. The garments should be refined, and the less conspicuous they are the better. In the set for Act I, the cheap newness of a modern parvenu's house should be shunned.*

BETTER THAN REVENGE

ACT I

[*The mansion of NAKAGAWA SABUROBYOE at Tawara Machi in Yedo. A moonlight night early in the autumn of the third year of Enkyō.*

To begin with, before the curtain opens, an angry voice thunders, Dog! Indecent cur! a sword is heard to slip out of its sheath and there is a clatter of rapidly moving feet. Then the curtain opens on the detached pavilion at the mansion of NAKAGAWA SABUROBYOE. To the left is a bamboo fence, over the top of which at a little distance the main house is visible. Autumn herbs grow in the front garden. The pavilion is surrounded on the left and front by a veranda. A little to the left is an ornamental alcove with a lacquered armor box in it. Beside the alcove is a tea cabinet with a two-fold screen standing to the right of it. When the curtain opens, SABUROBYOE, pale-faced and brandishing a great sword, is endeavoring to cleave ICHIKURŌ in two. ICHIKURŌ, shielding himself behind a veranda pillar, is struggling to make his escape. The concubine, OYUMI, stealthily opening the sliding door behind the screen, seems to intend fleeing that way.]

Ichikurō [in a voice quivering with desperation

and earnestness]. Pardon, my lord. I've not been disloyal. I've done absolutely nothing disloyal. [*While protesting, looks for a way of escape, but since the yard is surrounded by a fence, it seems that flight that way would only give his pursuer freedom to swing his great sword, and he continues desperately shielding himself behind the pillar.*]

Saburobyoe [*in an agonized and desperate voice*]. Hold your tongue. Hold your tongue. You dastardly dog, to beg your life now.

Ichikurō. It's not true. It's not true. It's a great— Such a thing with the mistress— It's a great mistake.

Saburobyoe. Have done!

[SABUROBYOE *springs forward and, avoiding the pillar, strikes. ICHIKURŌ dodges to the right. SABUROBYOE pulls back his sword and cuts from the right. ICHIKURŌ dodges to the left.*]

Saburobyoe [*irritated*]. Rat!

[SABUROBYOE *goes round the pillar. ICHIKURŌ turns round and round with him two or three times, after which he is finally driven from the post and, jumping down from the veranda, makes one turn of the yard. But the brush gate is fastened. If he stops to open it, he is sure to be struck down from behind, so he turns back again, gets past SABUROBYOE and, jumping up into the room again, is about to flee through a sliding door when his hand suddenly falls*

on a candelabrum standing there. Just then SABUROBYOE catches up and gives him a slight scratch on one shoulder.]

Ichikurō. Ah! [Crying out in terror, unconsciously swings round with the candelabrum in his hand. The candle goes out and, lighted only by moonbeams, the scene becomes dim.]

Saburobyoe. Dog! Would you raise your hand against your lord, villain! [Cuts at him more furiously than ever. They rush together fiercely several times. Pursued closely, ICHIKURŌ is in danger. The tip of SABUROBYOE'S sword finally cuts his face near the ear.]

Ichikurō. Oh! [With a cry of consternation, he turns desperate and begins to fight savagely. First he throws the candelabrum at his antagonist. Struck in the face by its sharp point, SABUROBYOE falters staggeringly. Meanwhile, ICHIKURŌ unsheaths the sword at his own waist. A wordless and desperate encounter begins. SABUROBYOE suffers the disadvantage from time to time of having his great sword strike the ceiling. As they cut at each other, the two men draw near the veranda. ICHIKURŌ, who comes out on the veranda first, inadvertently slips and goes down on one knee. Triumphantly Saburobyoe raises his sword to strike, but in his hurry, he mistakes and cuts deep into the beam running overhead between the room and the veranda. Delighted at his

providential escape, ICHIKURŌ, still on one knee, cuts with his sword at his antagonist's ribs. With a cry, SABUROBYOE topples over.

ICHIKURO, like one struck senseless, crumbles down on the veranda and simply remains there emitting a low groan.

Two or three minutes pass, during which but for the groaning of ICHIKURŌ and the dying SABUROBYOE, nothing goes on on the stage. ICHIKURŌ finally raises his face and looks at the still twitching body of his dead master. When it ceases moving utterly, suddenly as if driven by remorse, he draws his sword again and is about to disembowel himself. At this moment the screen in the corner of the room moves. OYUMI appears. She is pale and trembles a little but struggles to hide her inner panic.]

Oyumi [looking out of the corner of her eye at ICHIKURŌ, about to take his own life]. Really I was in a fright about how it would come out. I stood behind the screen holding my breath and wondering whether it wouldn't be my turn the minute you had been cleft asunder. I was tempted to run away, but there was my sense of loyalty to you, who seemed about to be hewn down. But really you were as good as dead, weren't you? We're not to the end of our luck yet. With things come to this, there's no delaying, so we must gather up what money there is and clean out. They don't seem to have noticed

anything over in the main house, so now's the time to make ready. Come, man, let's look for what money there is.

Ichikurō [has, while the woman has been running on, given up the idea of suicide. But he is still stupid and lost]. Ah, I've done a terrible thing. I've perfidiously slain my master.

Oyumi [disregarding his words]. Man, this is no time to be puling. It's not manly. Pull yourself together. I'll get myself ready, so you look for money.

Ichikurō. Ah, it's terrible. I've murdered my master. I've murdered my master. I've murdered my master, a crime punishable with crucifixion.

Oyumi [as she tries to lift him up]. Weren't you fighting for your life hanging by a thread? Come, you must make ready at once.

[*Ichikurō*, like a puppet in the hands of the woman, gets up and, keeping far away from the dead body of SABUROBYOE, goes to the tea cabinet and begins to search in it. Bloody finger prints are left stickily here and there on the white grain of the paulownia wood. OYUMI goes into the next room and soon hurries back with a bundle done up in a cloth wrapper.]

Oyumi. How much was there?

Ichikurō [lowering his voice]. Just one five ryō package in *nishugin* pieces.

Oyumi [going to the tea cabinet herself and stir-

ring about in its contents]. What can we do with this nothing? Look in the armor box. There may be money in it for campaigning or something.

Ichikurō [a little livelier than before, opening the armor box and holding up the armor and shaking it]. This is empty, too.

Oyumi [regrettfully]. He was a notorious niggard, so it's probably hidden in a vase or something and buried in the ground. It can't be found in a hurry. Come, let's call good enough sufficient and be off before some one sees us.

[*Ichikurō washes his blood-stained hands in a basin and tightens his sash.*]

Oyumi [suddenly turning her eyes to SABURO-BYOE's corpse]. Even this was the master on whose kindness I depended for near two years. Come, I'll just pay my respects and be off. [Standing, raises one hand and bows.]

[*ICHIKURŌ kneels in silence and clasps his hands before the corpse. They start to go.*]

Oyumi. You have the key to the back gate, haven't you?

Ichikurō. That's my duty. It's always at my waist.

Oyumi. You're just the man, aren't you? [Laughs enticingly.]

[*The moonlight has become brighter and brighter. As they unlock the brush gate and start out, the voice*

of the nurse is heard singing in the main house.

How old is Miss Moon?

Thirteen and seven.

Still her years are few.

Out to buy oil,

Out to buy tea.

The lonely voice of a little boy sings the song over again.]

Ichikurō [as he is about to leave the brush gate, fascinated by the boy's song]. Ah, it's the boy!

Oyumi [going out the gate]. Man! What are you doing mooning there? [Pulls him firmly by the hand.]

[They go out. As the moon shines and the singing goes on in the house, the curtain slowly closes.]

ACT II

SCENE I

[Before a rest house conducted by ICHIKURŌ and OYUMI at Torii Pass on the Kiso Highway. Two or three years after the events in Act I. A large thatched house, with the right half given up to an earthen floor on the ground level. The left half is wall. There is a door in the wall. In the earthen-floored half, mugwort rice-cakes, bean-jelly and dried persimmons are set out for sale. There are two long benches, and on the sliding paper doors are the

ideographs for "Buckwheat" and "Warmed Rice Wine." At the back is a cryptomeria forest. One old cherry tree spreads its branches over the house. Its buds are beginning to swell.

When the curtain opens, the hostler, GONSAKU, having fastened his horse to a cryptomeria beside the house, is sitting on one of the benches and talking back into the store.]

Gonsaku. Listen, elder sister! Don't talk so cruelly. Isn't an account an account, isn't business business? In the spring prosperity I'll make a wad and pay the whole thing off. Come, won't you leave off grumbling and put me down prettily for one bottle? [*There is no answer.*] Listen, elder sister! There's no call to be cross like that. Though there is an account, it can't be for more than a *ryō* or a *ryō* and a couple of *bu*. When the travelers get a little thicker, won't such a nothing be just a day or two's work?

Oyumi [*out of sight*]. If you were man enough to bring the money you make here and turn it over faithfully, I'd trust you for five or ten *ryō* without a word. But aren't you good for nothing when you get two *bu*, nay even two *shu*, but to go to Yabuhara and buy a cheap slut with it or gamble it away?

Gonsaku [*leaving the bench angrily*]. You needn't talk pert. At whose connivance do you

think it is that a pair of villains like you go on living boldly in the face of the sun? Pshaw, I don't forget, it was the day after Higan the year before last that, hearing there'd been a murder this side Yabuhara, I went and found that the dead man was an old traveler about sixty. He had been pitifully stripped of everything from his clothes to his traveler's sword, but a tobacco pouch had been dropped and left behind. It wasn't an old man's pouch, and when I took a better look at it, I was surprised. I felt that I had seen it somewhere before. After inspecting it carefully, I knew the feeling was natural, for it was a pouch of Yedo workmanship such as is seldom seen in the Kiso mountains.

Oyumi [still out of sight]. Haven't you got *sake* with that yarn more times than you can remember? If that's your story, I've got something to say, too. I don't remember the date exactly, as you do, but anyway it was last year in the summer when run-away pilgrimages were all the go and pilgrims, each with his umbrella and staff, passed along this road continually. One evening a mere girl of sixteen or seventeen came running up sobbing, so we took her in and when we found out what was the matter, weren't we surprised? At the beginning of the climb to the Torii Pass, she had been attacked by a hostler who met her and robbed her of all the money she had along for her trip. When we asked what he

looked like, we learned that he had heavy eyebrows like caterpillars and—

Gonsaku [*laughing bitterly*]. Pshaw! If that's your story, I've got something I want to follow it up with. That mere girl who came running up crying, —who was it deceived her with pretenses of kindness and sold her off to serve in a Fukushima tea-house?

Oyumi. Do you think I'd let you have it all your own way? If you come out with clever stuff, I'll produce clever stuff myself. But listen, Gonsaku San, have you ever heard the proverb, "When the fox is caught, the badger can't rest"? I'm always thinking that. If one should have to go into a dark hole, the more company the better, you see. You or some such fellow as that Tatsuzō at Narai would probably favor us with such friendship, wouldn't you?

Gonsaku [*making to go*]. Don't threaten me. The worst that can happen to me is life imprisonment. Don't go trying to line me up with scaffold birds like you two. [*In a passion, unties his horse and starts to go.*]

Oyumi [*appearing in the earthen-floored room for the first time and putting away the teacup used by GONSAKU*]. Gonsaku San! Haven't you any money to leave for your tea?

Gonsaku [*disgustedly*]. Importunate bitch!

[GONSAKU goes out with his horse-bell tinkling.]

Though a little commonplace, it is all right to have GONSAKU sing "Kiso Bushi." OYUMI puts up the tea things quietly. While she is at it, ICHIKURŌ comes out of the door at the left stifling a yawn. There is a little more evil in his face than there was in Act I, and he wears an old kimono of yellowish figured silk bound at the waist with a three-foot sash. At sight of him, OYUMI speaks harshly.]

Oyumi. Say, man, it's already the eighth hour. No matter how little you've got to do, isn't this too much? If you don't brace up a bit and do something in a hurry, there won't be even a copper cash left.

Ichikurō [returning OYUMI's glance a little sullenly]. The sun's warm, isn't it? It's altogether spring!

Oyumi [sitting down on a bench, begins to smoke]. What happy-go-lucky stuff are you talking? After the long shut-in winter, there's very little left of the fifty *ryō* you got in last autumn. Though that's not unreasonable, since the two of us get away with nearly three quarts of *sake* a day.

Ichikurō [hanging his head]. That's not likely the reason, but of late my head's frightfully heavy and I'm so downcast I can't do anything. The lukewarmness of spring may be bad for the health instead of good, mayn't it?

Oyumi [impatiently]. Rather than talking like that, you've got to pull yourself together when a

good bird comes to the trap.

Ichikurō. I say, won't you give me a smoke?

[*OYUMI hands her tobacco and pipe to ICHIKURŌ, and he squats down by the wall beside the door and smokes. A young married couple on pilgrimage draws near.*]

Young Husband. Ah, I wish we were already in sight of the post-town Yabuhara.

Young Wife. They said at the bottom of the hill that if we went up a *ri* we'd see it below us.

Young Husband. Aren't you tired?

Young Wife. No.

Young Husband. Here's a tea house. Let's go rest a minute.

[*OYUMI sees them and greets them with a face that is one big smile.*]

Oyumi. Come, please sit down. You must be tired. With this road all mountain hills, you must find it hard traveling with a tender woman.

Young Husband [*sitting down with his wife*]. I'm told that this pass is the steepest place on the road; does it go down from here?

Oyumi. Yes, yes. It certainly does. Look, can't you see where the valley opens out and the wheat fields widen?

Young Husband [*standing on tiptoe*]. To be sure.

Oyumi. That line of pines in the very middle

is the highroad leading into Yabuhara. Look, look, you see that big roof shining in the afternoon sunlight, don't you? That's the temple Myōhonji at the entrance to the town.

Young Husband. To be sure, I see. It can't be two *ri* farther, can it?

Oyumi. Two nothing; it's barely over one. Even if you take a good rest, you'll be there easily before the sixth hour.

Young Husband. The special product of Yabuhara is the comb called *orokugushi*, if I remember rightly.

Oyumi. It is. You must buy yourself a great lot of them on your way back.

[*As they talk, OYUMI serves tea and gets out cakes. The Young Wife glances round from time to time uneasily at ICHIKURŌ.*]

Oyumi. By the way, how far are you journeying?

Young Husband. Well, after going to worship at the Ise shrines, we mean to journey up to Kyōto and do the sights, and if circumstances permit, we think we may go round through Yamato.

Oyumi. Whether you think of the time it'll take or the money, it's a splendid plan. But even so, you seem to have nobody with you.

Young Husband. Wherever we go, people say that and are surprised, but the fact is, we started out

with a careful man servant, but he fell ill when we had reached the castle town of Matsumoto and, since it would cost a good deal to send for another, we left him at an inn and came on.

Oyumi. After all, to be alone is more comfortable.

Young Husband [*looks round at his wife and smiles a meaningless smile*]. Now that we've had a rest, come, let's be off. It's just a step now.

Oyumi. Just take it easy. The sun's high.

Young Husband. There are reasons why it's expedient to reach an inn early. We've been a great trouble to you. I'll just put the tea money here. [*Starts to go.*]

Oyumi. Thank you. On your way back, please be sure to stop. Well then, take good care of yourselves on the way.

[*OYUMI stands watching them go for a minute. ICHIKURŌ goes on smoking dreamily. OYUMI, as if suddenly thinking of something, runs into the house and immediately runs out again with ICHIKURŌ's short sword.*]

Oyumi [*pointing the sword at his shoulder*]. Come! Man!

Ichikurō [*sullenly, pretending ignorance of what she wants*]. Wha—wha—what do you want!

Oyumi [*assuming a rather rough tone*]. Don't pretend you don't understand. There's a job to be

done. Isn't there an important job on hand?

Ichikurō [*looking disgusted*]. What! Those people! You're heartless. [*Gets up as if to drive her away.*]

Oyumi. Who's heartless? Aren't you just that yourself? Just now while I strove impatiently somehow to hold them even a little longer, you sat there smoking like a log. Come! Don't be loafing, but hurry along off with you this minute.

Ichikurō [*with considerable force*]. Oh! I hate it! It depends upon the party. No matter if it is my business, to put an end to a happy pair like that is too cruel.

Oyumi. If we go on saying as you do that we don't like old people or children or married people, our business will be done for. There's nothing so annoying as a Buddha-hearted thief. You'd best consider. In the old days, I myself was not a completely deserted woman. What on earth do you think it's for that I who was so well known in the Asakusa district that men even called me Umamichi Komachi have drifted deep back into the Kiso mountains and am living such a miserable life as no wild monkey would live? Isn't it all because I have you, the villainous slayer of your own lord, for a master?

[*ICHIKURŌ stands in silence with drooping head.*]

Oyumi. In return for my keeping you company, it's probably no crime for you to give me three meals a day and the *sake* I like, is it?

Ichikurō [*a little angrily*]. Don't talk big. If you've got something to say, so have I myself. I, the faithful and careful servant of my lord, who when I had finished my term of service safely in the Nakagawa mansion would probably have become a pensioner in the household, was infatuated and, oh, terrible! Who on earth do you think it was that made me turn my hand against my master?

Oyumi [*sneering*]. H'm! Nonsense! Was it any of my affair whether you went mad over me or not? Better than moping over such by-gones, don't they say that when you drink poison, you should drink it to the dregs? What you want is to drink delicious *sake* till you're drenched with it, isn't it? Anyway, isn't this the sword with which you struck down your lord? Your crime probably can't be lightened now by the sparing of a life or two. [*A little soothingly.*] And besides, it isn't necessary for you to finish them off? From his appearance, he's the unsophisticated son of some rich house, so that without even putting him to the sword, if you only threaten him with a naked blade, it will be nothing to get away with all he has on him. Think of it! Inexperienced travelers with fifty or a hundred *ryō* tucked away in their bosoms don't go by very often.

And what I want is the spotted silk crape that woman had on! I want to see how it feels to get into that sort of a kimono once in a while.

Ichikurō [*finally taking the short sword from Oyumi*]. "To the she-devil, a devil for husband," they say, but your villainy is two or three grades to the good. It can't be helped. I'm off.

Oyumi [*laughing as she gives ICHIKURŌ a resounding thump on the back*]. You're a nice fellow, aren't you? Pretending to be vexed!

Ichikurō. Bring sake. Cold will do.

Oyumi. Let it go till you get back. I'll put it on to warm.

Ichikurō. I said to bring it.

Oyumi [*goes in and comes out reluctantly with sake*]. If you're thinking it's pitiful or something, you're likely to make some fool mistake.

Ichikurō [*without a word, swallows ravenously from the bung hole of the sake tub*]. Ah, it's bitter sake. [*Throwing the tub on the ground, hurries off.*]

Oyumi [*watching him go*]. Since they're going up to Kyōto after visiting Ise, they must have fifty *ryō*. [*Suddenly shivering.*] It's still cold, when the sun begins to set. [*The bell of some mountain temple booms.*] Oh, that must be the sixth hour bell.

[*The curtain closes quietly.*]

SCENE II

[*A little later than the events in Scene I. The*

same place and the same house. The stage is like the stage in Scene I turned to the right. An inner room in the rest house. There is an entrance at the left. The moon is shining outside the door. OYUMI, sitting loosely alone, has got out a samisen and is picking it with her nails. But as soon as the curtain opens, a string snaps and she throws the samisen from her violently. She pulls over some tobacco and falls to smoking desperately.

ICHIKURŌ enters. *He carries a bundle of garments under his arm. He looks behind him from time to time. When he comes to his own house, he sits down on the threshold with a sigh of relief.*

Oyumi [*hearing with quick ears*]. Who is it? Who is it? Is it you? Is it you, Ichikurō San?

[ICHIKURŌ sits silently and answers nothing.]

Oyumi [*getting up*]. Who is it? Who is it? [*Opens the sliding paper door.*] What! It's you after all, is it? Don't sit idly in such a place, but come up into the house quickly. You were quicker than I thought you'd be.

[ICHIKURŌ goes in. *But he still says nothing.*]

Oyumi. How'd you get along? Swimmingly! [*Taking the garments from ICHIKURŌ and looking at them.*] Oh, there are no cuts in them. You've grown very skilful, haven't you? Oh, it's beautiful crape, isn't it? No matter how fine the goods, if there's blood splashed over them, as hard as I may

be, I can't abide them; but come, make yourself comfortable. The *sake's* all hot, so won't you take a cup while you tell me all about it?

Ichikurō [*pale as death, and after sitting down without a word.*] Ah, I'm tired.

Oyumi. Oh, you, you're moping again, aren't you? Did you kill them after all? That's much the surer and neater way.

Ichikurō [*heavily shaking his head again and again*]. Ah, I've done ill. I meant to just follow and threaten them, but the woman went mad and cried, "It's the tea house man," so there was nothing else to do, and I finished them. Ah, I feel weak at the pit of my stomach. Ah, pour me out a drink.

Oyumi. Well, then, man, how big was the haul?

Ichikurō [*taking two money belts and two purses, one each a man's and one a woman's, from his bosom.*] It seems they feared something might happen on the way, for they had divided it between them. I haven't counted it yet, but from the feel, it's forty *ryō*.

Oyumi. Here, let me see. [*Scooping out the money.*] There are thirty *koban*, twenty *nibugin* and thirty or forty *nishugin*. Roughly fifty *ryō*. It's a rich haul such as we haven't made for some time. [*Taking the garments on her knees.*] And these clothes are delightful, aren't they? Here's a

long scarlet crape undergarment and a white lined black sash of heavy silk. [*As if suddenly thinking of something.*] Wait, man. What did you do with the head things?

Ichikurō. The head things? What do you mean, head things?

Oyumi. Yes, indeed. Head things. That woman's head things.

[*ICHIKURŌ vouchsafes no answer.*]

Oyumi. With a spotted silk kimono and a long scarlet crape undergarment, her head things weren't likely to be an imitation comb and bar, were they? A while ago when she took off her sedge hat, I stole a glance at them, and they were tortoise shell, and no mistake.

[*ICHIKURŌ remains silent.*]

Oyumi [*leaning toward him*]. Man! It's not likely you forgot to take them, is it? Since they're tortoise shell, they're certainly worth seven or eight *ryo*. If you come off without such valuable articles as that, being no greenhorn robber, what do you kill for? When did you begin this business that you overlook the head things when you lay low a woman dressed like that? Isn't there a limit to doing absurd things? What do you think? Say something.

Ichikurō [*in disgust*]. Aren't you talking horribly? It's surely no crime that, having stripped

her of her clothes, I left her her hair ornaments at least as a woman's little treasures to carry into the next world with her.

Oyumi. Pshaw! Have done with your priggish sermons. If you leave them lying there like that, won't they stick to some outcast beggar like millet to a wet hand? Just run down quickly and get them.

Ichikurō [*in intense hatred of the woman*]. They say that women understand women and men understand men; you'd better imagine yourself in the dead woman's place. As a woman, don't you feel the least pity for her?

Oyumi [*scornfully*]. Ho! "Tears in a devil's eyes," is well said. If she was so pitiful, you didn't have to strangle her in that spotted towel.

Ichikurō [*tearing off the towel at his waist as if horrified*]. Ah, I'm utterly sick of this business.

Oyumi. That's because you bungle it. Don't whine, man! Just run along. After nightfall, there's not even a pup astir on this road. They're there yet of course, so just run along. Isn't it nonsense to hesitate about what's specially come to us? And you're not the sort that hesitates, either, are you?

[*ICHIKURŌ is buried in silence and says nothing.*]

Oyumi. Oh! It looks as if you're offended because you've been criticized for your clumsiness,

doesn't it? I don't want to be tedious, but do you really mean not to go? Do you mean to let a gain of practically ten *ryō* slip through your very fingers?

[ICHIKURŌ *is buried in silence and makes no reply.*]

Oyumi. No matter what I say, you won't go, will you? Then I'll just run along myself. It's the same place, I suppose?

Ichikurō [*explosively*]. Of course. The row of pines this side Yabuhara.

Oyumi [*rising and tucking up her skirts*]. Then I'll trot along. It's moonlight and bright outside and,—you're a troublesome robber, all right. [*Goes down into the yard and thrusting her feet into her straw sandals, is about to go.*]

Ichikurō [*turning round and staring at her*]. Are you really going?

Oyumi. Why not?

Ichikurō. There's a limit even to evil doing.

Oyumi [*as she goes*]. Pshaw, mind your own business. Ah, it's a beautiful moonlight night. [*Trots off.*]

Ichikurō [*getting up*]. Ah, she's gone at last. [*Goes out.*] She doesn't look like a human being as she runs through the low striped bamboo. She's like a wolf closing in on a corpse. [*Watches for a little after she has disappeared and then totters into*

the house. Taking up the bottle on the tray, empties it at a gulp.] Ah, she's a devil, she's a devil that's got hold of me. [Holds his head and writhes for a moment. Suddenly notices the garments of the man and, touching them, holds his hand up to the light.] It's blood. After all, there's blood on them. [Stares vacantly in front of him.] When I took strong hold, those two white hands wrapped themselves around my hand like snakes or something. Ah, I can't bear it. [Writhes as if to shake off an unhappy memory. After a little, as if suddenly struck by an idea.] That's it. Before she gets back. [Rises and takes two or three garments out of a closet. Quickly does them up in a cloth wrapper. Suddenly notices the stolen purses left by the woman beside the tray. Puts them in the bosom of his kimono.] Ah, my hundred-year love has cooled. [Hurries out of the door. Suddenly puts his hand on the money in his bosom. Stands and thinks. Walks back two or three steps and thinks. Finally takes it out angrily.] It's soiled money! [Throws it fiercely into the house. The gold coins jump from the purses and roll about the room sparkling brightly. ICHIKURŌ runs off as fast as he can go.]

[Curtain.]

ACT III

SCENE I

[In the spring of the second year of Anei, more than twenty years after the events in Act II. The place is the Ao-no-Dōmon at Yabakei in Kyūshū. (For convenience the name of a later day is used.) The entrance of the tunnel. To the right, the rocks are worn away and a part of the Yamakuni River is visible. The rest of the stage is occupied by a grayish rock wall, in the middle of which is the mouth of the tunnel some eighteen feet high and twenty-four feet wide. Little stones are scattered all about it. By the river stand several cryptomerias. Along the edge of the rock wall, a plank bridge hangs perilously. It depends on the strength of a chain. When the curtain opens, an old Man who appears to be of rather good position, a Woman Pedlar and a Peasant with a horse come in order across the chain bridge fearfully. When they are all across, they stop a little on the stage for a rest.]

Old Man *[sitting down on a rock with a sigh of relief]*. I'm glad I've made an earnest vow to go on pilgrimage to Hachiman Sama of Usa once a year, but it's always as much as one's life is worth to get across this chain bridge. Since there's no wind these days and they've replaced the planking, there's no fear for one's life, but an old man's steps

are unsteady, unsteady.

Woman Pedlar. I'm a native of Hida village and, having to cross the bridge daily, am used to it, but on rainy days when it's slippery and when it's shaken by the wind, it's really dangerous.

Peasant [finally getting across the bridge with his horse]. Ah, that was tough. Half way over, when I thought he was going to rear, I shook with fear.

Woman Pedlar [to the Peasant]. Sakuzō San. Really you must be careful. It's really dangerous when you have a horse with you. If you fall in with the horse as Shinnemon of Kakizaka did last year, you're done for.

Peasant [jokingly]. If I should die with you, at least people would gossip about us, but to die with a horse would be a dog's death indeed.

[Two Stonecutters come out of the tunnel carrying loads of stone chips.]

Peasant. Hello, Shō Don. You're working hard, aren't you? Are you getting on a bit?

First Stonecutter [putting down his stones and sitting on them]. There's not been the least difference since the day I came. Since we're dealing with the living rock, you can't get through ten *ken* of it in half a year or a year.

Peasant. I suppose not. I suppose not. At first I thought it an impossible job, like gazing at

the sun through the eye of a needle. But Ryōkai Sama's perseverance is admirable. At first they called him the "Mad Priest," or the "Fraud," and when I was young, I threw a stone or two after him myself. But they've all bowed their heads before his perseverance. They say the stonecutters have been doubled since the district magistrate sent him a reward.

Stonecutter. Today we've got through four-fifths of it, so it's just a lick or two now. Ryōkai Sama can hardly lie down nights any more.

Old Man. I'd like somehow to live till this tunnel's done. And at this rate, it seems that I'll have my wish.

Peasant. The peasants of the seven villages of the Yamakuni valley are waiting impatiently for its completion. I mean to help this year myself as soon as I get my rice plants set out. It's taking too much from heaven to let Ryōkai do it all himself.

[*A number of Peasants come on from the left.*]

Second Peasant [*going to the mouth of the tunnel and listening*]. Ah, it's got deep. Two or three years ago, you could still hear the sound of the sledges clear out at the mouth.

Third Peasant. It's got deep. It's got deep. I bet Rinhachi in the next village that it'd be a year and a half more, and at this rate, I'll win.

Fourth Peasant. You shameless rascal! With

Ryōkai Sama working away all covered with dirt, you'll be punished by heaven.'

Third Peasant. Come on, Ryōkai Sama's always saying that he's working out his own salvation, and there's no end of grace for us, isn't he?

Fourth Peasant. To pay for what crime alone could a man do a tremendous piece of work like this? It's all because of his holy vow to redeem all living things. When I get some leisure, I too, mean to help.

Third Peasant. Go on and lie. You've gone on saying you'd help year after year and haven't picked up a sledge once yet, have you?

Fourth Peasant. Isn't the same thing true of you yourself?

[*While the Peasants are talking together, JITSUNOSUKE enters. He is in plain traveling garb and wears a cotton raincoat. When he sees the tunnel, he looks at the lie of the land round about a little excitedly, then examines the chain-bridge running to the right and comes back and looks into the tunnel. Meanwhile he has attracted the attention of the Peasants.*]

Jitsunosuke [*finally speaks to Second Peasant*]. I beg your pardon, but I'd like to ask you something. They say there's a priest named Ryōkai in this tunnel, but is this so?

Peasants [*together*]. There most certainly is.

Ryōkai Sama is just about the owner of this tunnel.

Jitsunosuke. Is he? Then I'd like to ask further about how old he is.

First Stonecutter [*looking suspiciously at the unknown warrior*]. Ryōkai Sama's past fifty. Just a little more and he'll be sixty.

Jitsunosuke [*calmly*]. I hear he's a native of Kashiwazaki in Echigo.

First Stonecutter. Yes, anyway he says it's a country where there's lots of snow.

Jitsunosuke. Haven't you heard that he served in Yedo when he was young?

Second Stonecutter. Yes, I've heard that he did. Once he told me about the prosperity of Asakusa Kwanzeon.

Jitsunosuke [*finally becoming tense*]. Thanks for what you've told me. Then is there but this one entrance to this tunnel?

First Stonecutter. Yes, that's clear. In order to open another over there, Ryōkai Sama is undergoing the bitterest of hardships.

Jitsunosuke. How many *chō* does it run in?

Second Stonecutter. What do you want to do that you ask that?

Jitsunosuke [*considering a moment*]. I want to see this Ryōkai Dono, or whatever you call him.

First Stonecutter. Wait. One not acquainted with the place can't walk in it. The rock sticks out

here and there and there are holes at intervals.

Jitsunosuke. Then, since I have business with him, won't you tell him somebody's come all the way from Echigo to see him?

Second Stonecutter. I'll just run in and tell him. [*Runs in.*]

Second Peasant. Are you a relative of Ryōkai Sama's? Everybody in the seven villages of this Yamakuni valley has been greatly blessed by him. We're indebted to you. [*Bows.*]

Old Man [*coming forward*]. Perhaps his reputation couldn't reach all the way from Kyūshū to Echigo, but Ryōkai Sama is to the people of the seven villages in this valley as blessed as Jichi Bosatsu. [*Bows. Looks round at the others.*] Here's a warrior relative of Ryōkai's. All express your thanks. [*All bow together. JITSUNOSUKE, a little troubled in mind, responds slightly.*]

Old Man. You can't be his son, can you? Are you his nephew? You're most welcome here. Where on earth did you learn about it?

Jitsunosuke. I've been going about visiting all the provinces by way of training myself in sword play and had the report from a man at the Hachiman shrine of Usa in your province.

Old Man. That was surely a meeting by the grace of heaven.

Second Peasant. It's been twenty years this

year. During all that time, he's worked away with all his heart. He says it's to atone for repeated crimes he committed when he was young, and of late he's been swinging his sledge into the night.

Jitsunosuke [half to himself]. To atone for repeated crimes? But the atrocious wickedness of killing one's lord can't be wiped out, I guess. [*Laughs mockingly.*]

Old Man. Even murder of his lord, was it? But with that spirit, even that, too, is probably wiped out.

Jitsunosuke. Whether it is or not will soon be clear. [*Laughs sardonically.*]

[*They begin to suspect JITSUNOSUKE a little and to whisper together. At this point RYŌKAI comes out with a Stonecutter supporting him by each arm. JITSUNOSUKE stealthily moistens the rivet in the hilt of his sword. RYŌKAI is emaciated and bony, and his legs beneath the knees are especially thin. Though his torn robe shows him to be a priest, his hair has grown long and covers his wrinkled face. His eyes are blurred like ash. When he emerges from the tunnel, he staggers as if dazzled. When the Peasants see him, they kneel and worship.*]

Second Stonecutter [as he assists RYŌKAI]. Take care.

Ryōkai [groping with his hands]. Where is he? Where is he?

Second Stonecutter. Just over there. Right there.

Ryōkai [*as if he has caught a faint glimpse of JITSUNOSUKE*]. Who are you? My old eyes have failed and it's hard to make out.

Jitsunosuke [*a little startled at sight of his worn out enemy and breaking the assumed sternness he had put on in the first place*]. Are you called Ryōkai Dono?

Ryōkai. I am. And you?

Jitsunosuke [*a little excitedly*]. No matter how you disguise yourself as a priest called Ryōkai or whatever you call yourself, probably you won't lie. You don't forget how when you were a young man called Ichikurō, you killed your lord, Nakagawa Saburobyoe, in Yedo and ran away, do you?

Ryōkai [*in a calm but humble voice, which shows that though he regrets his crime, he is saved from his sin*]. I did. I did. And who are you that say this?

Jitsunosuke. You probably don't forget. I'm Saburobyoe's only son, Jitsunosuke.

Ryōkai [*weeping bitter tears*]. Jitsunosuke Sama! I remember. I remember well. He who cut down your father and ran away was no other than this miserable Ryōkai.

Jitsunosuke. I've spent nearly ten years of pain and agony to strike you down, you monstrous slayer

of your master and runaway. Since we now meet, it's too late to escape, so let's fight it out fairly.

Ryōkai. You've suffered long. I'm very sorry. I've thought of nothing but atoning for my sins. I never thought of putting you to all this pain. Come, cut me down. [*Begins to see a little*]. At last I see your face. It's as if I behold with mortification your father's face before my eyes. Come, cut me down. You've probably heard about it, but this hole here is the tunnel this miserable Ryōkai hoped to dig to wipe out his sins, and after twenty years, it's all but done. Though I die, it won't be a year now. Come, cut me down. If I fall by your hand and become a human sacrifice bathing the entrance of this tunnel with my blood, I shall be content.

Jitsunosuke [*moved but striving not to be turned from his long cherished design*]. A proper resignation. Truly, though one strive for good results, one cannot escape the reward of one's evil doing. You'll do well to cry your last praises to Buddha.

[*At first the Peasants and Stonecutters stand aghast at the sudden turn affairs are taking. In the midst of things, they realize that RYŌKAI's life is in danger. One of the Stonecutters goes in to give the alarm.*]

Second Stonecutter. Hello there. Everybody come out. [*Cries in a loud voice into the tunnel*].

[*The Stonecutters, each with a steel sledge in his*

hand, come yelling out, and forming a wide circle round JITSUNOSUKE protect RYŌKAI. RYŌKAI, breaking away from their protection, struggles to get to JITSUNOSUKE.]

Head Stonecutter [stopping him]. What do you mean to do to Ryōkai Sama?

Jitsunosuke [seeing the crowd, whips out his sword. As he watches in every direction]. That aged priest is my father's murderer. Today by chance I meet him and carry out my heart's desire. If you shield the grievous villain who slayed his master, you bring upon your heads the punishment of all the gods and the Buddhas.

Head Stonecutter [haughtily]. Revenge is a thing of the world of the living. As you see, Ryōkai Dono has forsaken the world. Moreover, he is worshiped as a Buddha by not only the seven villages of the Yamakuni valley but by the people in all the villages in Bungo and Higo along the Yamakuni River. Could we let such a man be uselessly cut down?

Jitsunosuke [thoroughly angered]. Say no more. Say no more. What though he has forsaken the world, the fearful crime of killing one's lord is one of the eight deadly sins. If you get in my way, I'll cut you every one down and make you a heap of corpses. *[In a rage, makes to slash into them. The Stonecutters give a cry and all lift their sledges toge-*

ther. The Peasants pick up stones and set themselves to hurl them.]

Ryōkai [writhing desperately]. All give over sinning. If one of you throws a stone or touches this warrior with a single finger, Ryōkai will hate you. In the friendship with which you have long helped me, simply let me be cut down as I am. I know reasons sufficient why I should die. The feeling that made me want to dig this tunnel is the same feeling that makes me want to be cut down here now. The completion of the tunnel is in sight. Moreover, nothing could give me greater pleasure than to fall by the hand of this filial son. All give over sinning.

Head Stonecutter. For that reason, do you suppose we could stand by and see you cut down before our eyes?

Ryōkai. Rather than watching me cut down, if you will, in the interval, break down even one little splinter of stone, I shall take more pleasure in that than in my last adoration of Buddha. Come! Withdraw!

Second Stonecutter. That won't do. If you die, there's no telling what'll become of this tremendous project. We are able to carry on the fight with this unflinching rock day and night because you're watching us. Your death would be like the tunnel we have already dug caving in in a

night.

Stonecutters [all talking at once]. True. True. We can't have it. We can't have it.

Second Peasant. True. True. That which has long rejoiced us will come to naught. Ryōkai Sama mustn't die now.

Jitsunosuke. That's all settled. I'll not spare anybody who tries to stop me now.

[JITSUNOSUKE makes to rush upon the Stonecutters with his sword. Rocks fly like hail. He falls back.]

Ryōkai [writhing]. Do you want to show me the agonies of Hell while I still live on this earth? Because of Ryōkai's sin, would you injure a most filial warrior? Strike him with a single rock and see. I'll bite my tongue off and kill myself on the spot.

[The Stonecutters and Peasants stop throwing stones. JITSUNOSUKE looks at RYŌKAI and makes to cut him down. The Stonecutters and Peasants again offer determined resistance. The Old Man leaves the others and walks up to JITSUNOSUKE.]

Old Man. Wait. Your heart is right. But so are those of the stonecutters and peasants. Then calm yourself and hear me well. Struggle as you may, there are more than forty against you. Moreover, while we're talking like this, the people of all this region will be telling of Ryōkai's danger and

steadily rushing in. However skilful you may be with your sword, you can't fight against a crowd. Come, now's the time to think. Listen, oh, warrior! The construction of this tunnel is the vow of Ryōkai Sama's life. He has broken body and soul with nearly twenty years of hardship. However much it may be his karma, can't you see how mortifying it would be to die when the fulfilment of his vow is in sight. The reason they all shield him is that. I don't ask for long. Until this tunnel is through, please put Ryōkai Sama's life in our hands. He is as you see. He could not run away and hide. When the tunnel's through, do as you like.

Stonecutters and Peasants. That's right. That's right.

Old Man. They all ask it like that. Please leave this place for a while. If you're willing to wait, I'll find a house in which you can stay. All of you, give your word. Say that when the time's up, you'll positively not change.

Stonecutters and Peasants. We vow. We vow. We give our word.

Old Man. Ryōkai Sama, what do you say?

Ryōkai. When I think of the noble warrior's pain, I don't wish to live another day.

Old Man. That won't do. Your life is like a drill of Buddha's to cut this tunnel through. Till the tunnel's done, you can't throw it lightly away.

Warrior! Did you hear? What's your idea?

Jitsunosuke [after a moment's thought]. In consideration of Ryōkai's priesthood, I'll grant the request. Don't forget the condition attached.

Head Stonecutter. Who's likely to? The moment this tunnel's through, be the hole but a *sun* or a *bu*, you may cut Ryōkai Sama down where he stands. Well, Ryōkai Sama, an unexpected matter has taken our time. Come, let's get to work.

Ryōkai. Nay, here and now, I—

[As he tries to stay, the Stonecutters fairly pick him up and carry him away. JITSUNOSUKE looks after him regretfully.]

Old Man. Come, I'll take you to a place to stay. Since we've made that promise, though it's not kind to Ryōkai to say so, he's like a fish in a net. Just bide your time.

Jitsunosuke [looking at the tunnel entrance with vexation]. Where does Ryōkai sleep at night?

Old Man. There's neither night nor day with him. When he's exhausted, he leans against the rock where he sits and sleeps. It's a thing no ordinary human being could do.

Jitsunosuke. Does he? [Thinking.] Is this the seventh or eighth?

Old Man. The seventh.

Jitsunosuke [to himself]. The moon will die in

the hour of the rat. [*Laughs softly.*]

[*Curtain.*]

SCENE II

[*Inside the tunnel. Night of the same day. The whole stage is one solid wall of cleft rock. The tunnel comes to an end at the right side of the stage and Ryōkai and others wield their sledges there. A bonfire burns weakly. The clang of the sledges is heard before the curtain opens. When the curtain opens, the men all stop work.*]

First Stonecutter. When we all stop together, the silence is suddenly penetrating.

Second Stonecutter. Naturally, for we've come many *cho* under the earth.

Third Stonecutter. We must all stay by Ryōkai tonight, or that warrior who came today may come after him still unsatisfied.

First Stonecutter. That's unnecessary. We've sent watchmen to Hida village to keep constant watch at the place where he's staying.

Second Stonecutter. Ah, it must be the hour of the boar already. My hands ache till they're numb.

Ryōkai [*in a low hoarse voice*]. You're right, today's burning doesn't seem to have been sufficient, and the rock's uncommonly hard. Ah, all lay off

and go to the shed. I'll rest now, too. Come, all lay off.

Third Stonecutter. Then let's all knock off. You please rest, too, Ryōkai Sama. Come, I'll get the bedding for you.

[*The Third Stonecutter runs out and soon returns with a straw mat and some soiled bedding. These he spreads on the floor of the tunnel.*]

Ryōkai. Ah, thanks. Thanks. Then, excuse me. I'll turn in first. [*Goes to lie down.*]

First Stonecutter. Then, Ryōkai Sama, we'll see you in the morning.

Second Stonecutter. Pardon us.

Third Stonecutter. Pardon us.

[*The Stonecutters leave him. Ryōkai lies as if asleep for a moment, then slowly raises his body again.*]

Ryōkai [*clasping his hands, recites the Kwannon Sutra in a low voice*]. *Shin-kwan shōjō-kwan.

* Oh vision clear, oh vision pure, oh vision infinitely wise, oh vision compassionate and merciful, we rely upon thee ever, we ever lift our faces in adoration to thee. Thy pure and undefiled light, like a sun of wisdom, destroyeth all darkness, subdueth utterly calamity, storm and fire, and illumineth brightly every corner of the world. Thy compassionate form controlleth the thunder and the earthquake, thy merciful heart is like a wonderful vast cloud, from which falleth like sweet dew thy showers of holy rain, extinguishing the flames of earthly passion.

Kōdai chie-kwan. Hikwan kyūji-kwan. Jō-gwan
 jō shōgō. Muku shōjō kō. Enichi ha shoan Nō-
 fuku saifukwa. Fumyō shō seken. Hitai kai rajjin.
 Jii myō daiun. Ju kanro hōu. Metsujo bonnō-en.
 Since being fixed upon by Jitsunosuke, who's come
 to avenge my old crime, my life is like a torch in
 the wind. While I yet have life, I must dig on,
 though it be but a foot or an inch. It's no time to
 idle. [*Crawls to the rock wall and strikes harder
 than before. Raising his voice*]. †Jōjō kyō kwansho.
 Fui gunjin-chū. Nenbi Kwannon-riki. Shūen shit-
 taisan. Myō-on Kwanzeon. Bonnon kaichō on.
 Shōhi sekennon. Zeko shujō-nen. Nennen mos-
 shōgi. Kwanzeon shōjō. Okunō shiyaku. Nōi
 sakuiko. [*Swings his sledge as if mad. After a
 moment JITSUNOSUKE steals in from the left side of
 the stage. With a drawn sword held at the waist in
 his right hand and feeling his way along the ground
 with his left, he creeps noiselessly forward.* RYŌKAI,

† When through strife and struggle we fall into the
 hands of the officers, or when on the field of battle we
 tremble and are afraid, we rely upon thy power, oh
 Kwannon, and all our torments flee and are scattered. Oh,
 Kwanzeon, most marvelous sound, oh sound mysterious, oh
 sound of the holy All, oh sound of the ocean tides, superior
 art thou to all the sounds of the world, and hence we praise
 thee ever. And ever as we praise thee, we let no doubts
 arise within us, for, oh Kwanzeon, thou art pure, and in pain,
 agony, death and evil, thou art for us our sure reliance.

all unaware, goes on reciting the Kwannon Sutra. JITSUNOSUKE, preparing to rush upon him, hesitates. He finally raises his sword, but affected by RYŌKAI's wholehearted labor, finds it hard to strike, and putting the sword back into its scabbard, makes to leave.]

Ryōkai [suddenly looking round]. Jitsunosuke Sama! Why don't you cut me down? [Startled at being spoken to abruptly by RYŌKAI, JITSUNOSUKE is speechless.] You must have been vexed by today's settlement. Come, kill me. Now there's nobody here to prevent you. Before anybody comes to interfere, cut me down.

Jitsunosuke. Ryōkai, or whatever you're called, I shall now wait manfully till this tunnel's completed. In the dissatisfaction of a warrior who, with his enemy before him, must fold his arms, I disregarded the promise I'd made and crept in to cut you in two, but the flame of my anger being extinguished by your single-hearted and devout nobility, I felt ashamed of myself creeping up like a robber or a beast on you who are a holy saint, and the hand that held my sword was paralyzed in spite of me. So I'll wait patiently till you've fulfilled your vow.

Ryōkai [bowing low with his hands on the ground]. Do you lend me, most sinful priest that I am, the days necessary to fulfil my vow? A

thousand thanks. For this, I'll swing my sledge till I pound myself to dust in the determination to be through tomorrow or the next day. I can't apologize enough for having caused a filial son like you so much anguish. Please forgive me. Please forgive me. [*Goes up to JITSUNOSUKE with bowed head.*]

Jitsunosuke. Though we're enemies, it's our fate, and listen, Ryōkai, rather than wait idly here watching you people work, though I'm not worth much, I can take a sledge and help you get down a few splinters of stone. The day that brings you your dearest wish must of necessity bring me mine.

Ryōkai [*excited*]. You've hit on a good idea. Your work will be more dependable than that of a million partisans. While I see your face, I can't rest my sledge a minute.

Jitsunosuke. Rather than vex my spirit in idle waiting, I'll be more comfortable myself swinging a sledge for the good of the world and man. So, Ryōkai Dono, until this tunnel is through, we're friends, but—

Ryōkai. Ah, the minute this tunnel's through, be the hole but a *sun* or two across, cleave me in twain. I long for the day when your fondest wish and mine shall be fulfilled.

Jitsunosuke. Until then there will be an interest

in enemies swinging their sledges together.

[They look at each other and smile lonesomely.]

SCENE III

[The interior of the tunnel, as in Scene II. Night of the tenth day of the ninth month of the third year of Anei, more than a year later than the events in Scene II.]

A little differently than in the previous scene, Ryōkai and Jitsunosuke sit side by side in the middle of the stage and swing their sledges together ceaselessly.]

Jitsunosuke. Eh!

Ryōkai. Eh!

Jitsunosuke. Oh!

Ryōkai. Oh!

Jitsunosuke [resting a minute]. The stonecutters left early, didn't they?

Ryōkai [likewise resting]. They, too, bruised themselves cruelly all day today. Jitsunosuke, you rest too. It's the ninth hour already. Knock off now.

Jitsunosuke. Never. As the night grows late, the spirit clears and the energy doubles.

Ryōkai. After working so hard last night, please knock off a little early tonight.

Jitsunosuke. That's what I wanted to say to you. Is it right for us to let up before a sixty-year-

old priest like you? [*Lifts his sledge and brings it down again with an "Eh!"*]

Ryōkai. Oh! [*Strikes in response.*]

[*For a moment the two work on together.*]

Ryōkai [*again resting*]. Yesterday one of the stonecutters said he heard the shot of a hunter's gun faintly between two strokes of his sledge. Did you hear it?

Jitsunosuke. Though I didn't hear a gun, in the evening of the day before yesterday, I think it was, I remember hearing the first ripple of the stream, but it may have been a dream, as I nodded when I rested.

Ryōkai. It's been nearly a year already since you came. You've had to wait so long. What's more, during the last month or two, both my body and my mind have finally failed till hardly a tenth of my former strength remains. I feel that my time may come today or tomorrow. If I should fall dead with my sledge in my hand, I shouldn't have done right by you, not to speak of my own disappointment, so I've been doing my best, but oh, already I've reached the end of my endurance. Ah, rock! Oh, rock, at this one resolve, fall to dust! [*Strikes a violent blow.*]

Jitsunosuke. It's only diligent courage. If you give in now, it will be like breaking the basket with the last shovelful. Make your heart firm and wait.

Now, it's all a matter of will. Eh! [*Strikes fiercely.*]

Ryōkai. It's just as you say. There mustn't be any negligence or doubt in a single stroke. The power of Kwannon! Oh! [*Strikes.*]

[*The two, side by side, strike with all their might.*]

Ryōkai. Ah! [*Throwing away his sledge, clasps his right hand in his left.*]

Jitsunosuke [*hurrying to him*]. What's the matter? What's the matter?

Ryōkai. I struck a stone that was more brittle than it looked too hard and sunk my sledge in it up to the fist. [*Suddenly notices a hole in the face of the stone.*] Look! A strange hole has opened up!

Jitsunosuke [*going near the hole*]. That's strange, the wind comes in.

Ryōkai [*madly.*] What! What! The wind comes in? [*Lifts his sledge and goes on striking furiously. The rock falls away before his attack and leaves a hole.*] It crumbles. It crumbles. It crumbles beautifully.

Jitsunosuke [*wields his sledge madly beside Ryōkai*]. It goes through. It goes through beautifully.

Ryōkai. Ah, the wind comes in. The wind comes in. Can it be the tunnel's through? *Jitsunosuke Sama*, look carefully.

Jitsunosuke [*sticking half his body out through*

the hole]. Ah, truly your vow's fulfilled. I can see a faint glimmer. It's the Yamakuni River shining faintly in the darkness. Ryōkai Dono, your vow's truly fulfilled.

[RYŌKAI *only clasps his two hands together and writhes, making a sound like moaning, but saying no word.*]

Jitsunosuke. I can see it. I can see it. I can hear it. I can hear it. I can hear the stream. I can see something faintly white in the blackness just under my eyes, too. Surely it's the main highway. Ryōkai Dono, be happy.

Ryōkai [lifts his voice for the first time and laughs loud]. Oh, joy! It's like mounting to heaven in the flesh. My eyes and ears are both worn out, and I can't hear the river, but I can see a faint glimmer. Oh, joy! Joy! joy! joy! My heart's in a frenzy of joy. [*Writhes.*]

Jitsunosuke [taking Ryōkai's hand]. Of course, of course. If I feel this joy after helping you for only a year, how much more you must of course feel it tonight when after more than twenty years of suffering and pain, with the gods and Buddhas approving, you accomplish the cherished desire of your life. I'm glad, too.

Ryōkai [suddenly remembering]. Led astray by my own joy, I forgot. Tonight of course is the time agreed upon. Come, slay me. Even I, if I

die in this ecstasy, will surely live hereafter in the Pure Land. Come, slay me.

Jitsunosuke [*taking the hands Ryōkai has put to the ground*]. Ryōkai Dono, I've long since forgotten everything. In comparison with your great work in which you've racked body and soul for twenty years, whether vengeance be taken or not is the shallow business of the human world. I've had a year of religious austerities beside you and happily have freed myself absolutely of the wicked resentment of the world of blood. Look! The moon seems to have broken through the clouds, for it's moonlight.

Ryōkai [*sticking his head out the hole*]. Oh, joy! Even these old eyes can see the stream of the Yamakuni River faintly.

Jitsunosuke. This moonlight shines like a halo turning you instantly into a living Buddha. And for me it's the light of Nirvana dissipating my wicked resentment. Ah, it's refreshing moonlight! Rather than strike you down, I'll strike this rock like this. [*Taking up a long-handled sledge beside him, he strikes with all his might. The rock crumbles and the whole valley of the Yamakuni River lies revealed in the night.*]

Ryōkai. Indeed it's a most pleasant moon, isn't it? [*Again remembering.*] Come, Jitsunosuke, cut me down. Tomorrow the stonecutters may prevent you again. Come, slay me.

Jitsunosuke [*taking RYŌKAI's hand as he draws near*]. What nonsense are you talking? See there! Clear up to the peaks around Kakizaka, the country floats in the moonlight. Ah, it's moonlight that fulfills your great vow and leaves nothing to be desired.

[*They take hands and remain fascinated by the moonlight.*]

Ryōkai [*finally getting out his rosary and rolling it in his hands*]. All hail, Tonshō Bosatsu! in life called Nakagawa Saburobyoe Sama. Forgive Ryōkai's treason. [*Weeping, bows his head.*]

Jitsunosuke. Revenge is a dream of the past. Lift up your hands. For this evening of the fulfilment of your heart's desire, let us be glad from the bottom of our hearts. Oh, joy, joy! Oh, gladness!

[*As they clasp each other and weep, the curtain is pulled shut.*]

THE HOUSETOP MADMAN

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KATSUSHIMA YOSHITARŌ, the madman, aged 24.

SUEJIRŌ, his younger brother, a middle school student, aged,
17.

GISUKE, his father.

OYOSHI, his mother.

TŌSAKU, a neighbor.

KICHIJI, a serving man, aged 20.

A Hag called a Holy-woman, aged about 50.

TIME—*Meiji, in the thirties.*

PLACE—*An island off the coast of Sanuki in the Inland Sea.*

THE HOUSETOP MADMAN

[Scene—The yard behind the house of Katsushima, a prominent rich man of this small island. The inside of the house is invisible, being cut off by a surrounding bamboo fence. Only the high roof delimits the deep blue summer sky of this southern clime. The sea can be seen shining to the left. The elder son of the family, Yoshitarō, crouches on the very top of the roof back center and stares at the sea. His father's voice is heard from within the house.]

Gisuke [invisible]. You, Yoshi, you're up on that roof again, aren't you? In that burning sun. You'll get a stroke. [Coming out on the veranda]. Kichiji! Isn't Kichiji here?

Kichiji [enters right]. Yes, is there something?

Gisuke. Won't you bring Yoshitarō down? On a hot day like this without a hat he'll get a sunstroke. How does he get up on the roof? Did you put wire on the top of the shed as I told you to recently?

Kichiji. That's all done fast and well.

Gisuke [looking up at the roof as he comes out upon the stage through a swinging door in the bamboo fence]. Doesn't it bother him to sit like that on those tiles hot as baked stones? Yoshitarō! Come

down quickly. You'll die of sunstroke if you stay in a hot place like that.

Kichiji. Young master! Come down. It's bad for you to be in a hot place like that.

Gisuke. I say, Yoshi. Won't you come down quickly? Whatever can you be doing in such a place? Won't you come down quickly? I say, Yoshi!

Yoshitarō [*absently*]. What?

Gisuke. None of your whats. Come down quickly. You'll have a stroke broiling in the fiery sun. Come, get down at once! If you don't come down, I'll poke you from below with a pole.

Yoshitarō [*petulantly*]. I don't want to. There's something interesting here. Shōnenbō San of Kompira is dancing in a cloud. In a red robe, he's dancing with the angels. He says, "Come to me, come to me."

Gisuke. Don't talk nonsense. The fox that's got into you's fooling you. Won't you come down?

Yoshitarō [*overflowing with the joy of the insane*]. It's interesting. I want to go, too. Wait. I'm coming, too.

Gisuke. If you talk like that, you'll fall and get hurt again as you did once before. On top of your madness you go lame and give your parents nothing but trouble. Won't you come down, you fool, you!

Kichiji. Master, though you get angry like that, against the young master, can it do any good? Rather, shan't I go and buy some of the fried bean-curd he likes? If we show him that, he'll come right down.

Gisuke. Better still, poke him with a pole. I don't care.

Kichiji. I couldn't do such a cruel thing. The young master doesn't know anything. 'Cause it's the thing that's got him that makes him do it all.

Gisuke. How'd it be to put a line of pickets around the edge of the roof? So he couldn't possibly get up?

Kichiji. Nothing would be of any use against the young master. He'd climb up on the great roof of the temple Hondenji without any scaffolding. It's nothing for him to climb a low roof like this. Nothing's any use, since the thing that's got him makes him go up.

Gisuke. What's to be done? He stumps me. Even if he's crazy, it'd be all right if he'd sit still in the house, but to climb up and squat on high places is just like advertising his own madness. Sue tells me that talk of Katsushima's goblin madman has gone all the way to Takamatsu.

Kichiji. The people of the island say a fox has taken possession of him, but I can't understand that. I've never heard of a fox climbing up a tree.

Gisuke. I feel the same. My guess is different. When Yoshi was born, I killed all the monkeys on this island with a rare imported breach loader. Those monkeys are in him.

Kichiji. That may be so, mayn't it? If it wasn't, there'd be no reason for his being so sure at climbing trees, would there? He can climb up on to anything, whether he's got footholds or not. The best tricks of the ladder performers can't come up to the young master's, they say.

Gisuke [*laughing bitterly*]. Don't talk nonsense. Turn into the father of a roof-climbing son and see how you'd like it. Oyoshi and I are both worrying about him all the time. [*Raising his voice again.*] Yoshitarō! Won't you come down at once? Yoshitarō! Won't you come down? When he's up on the roof, he can't hear a man's voice; he's all in an ecstasy. Since I was troubled by his climbing them, I cut down all the trees around the house, but there's nothing I can do with the roof.

Kichiji. When I was little, there was a high maidenhair tree out in front of the gate, wasn't there?

Gisuke. Ah, that tree? That tree had become the landmark of the island. Once Yoshitarō climbed to the very top of that tree. And didn't he sit empty-headed on a branch eighty-five or ninety feet up in the air? And just as Oyoshi and I had given

him up for dead, he came slipping easily down again. We were all so surprised we couldn't talk.

Kichiji. You don't say. Positively no man's performance, was it?

Gisuke. That's why I say I think the monkeys have got him. [*Raising his voice.*] Yoshi, I say. Won't you come down? [*Suddenly changing his mind.*] Kichiji! Won't you go up?

Kichiji. But if anybody else goes up, won't the young master get angry surely?

Gisuke. All right. It's all right if he does get angry. Go up and pull him down.

Kichiji. All right, all right. [*Goes out to get a ladder. Just then the neighbor, TŌSAKU, comes in.*]

Tōsaku. Master. Good day.

Gisuke. Glad to see you. Fine weather, isn't it? What did you get in the net you put out yesterday? A pretty good haul, didn't you?

Tōsaku. Nothing at all. The season's past.

Gisuke. That's right, I guess. It's a little late. Catch a few scomberomorus already, can't you?

Tōsaku. Yesterday there were two or three in Seikichi's net.

Gisuke. Is that so?

Tōsaku. [*looking at YOSHITARŌ*]. Is the young master up on the roof again?

Gisuke. Yes, he's up there as usual. I don't

want him to be, but if you shut him up in a room, he's like a silver carp out of water. If you just take pity on him and let him out, he's up on the roof in a jiffy.

Tōsaku. But it's a good thing that the young master's sort's no trouble to those about them.

Gisuke. But he isn't altogether no trouble. He's a shame to his parents and brother, you see, climbing up on high places like that and sitting there.

Tōsaku. But his young brother Sue does so well at school in town that you can resign yourself, can't you?

Gisuke. Sue's as good as the ordinary, so I can bear it. There'd be no use living if they were both crazy.

Tōsaku. To be sure. Master. A most powerful holy-woman came to the island yesterday. I came over because I've been wondering how it would be to have her pray over the young master once.

Gisuke. Did you? But he's been prayed over more times than I can remember, only it's never had the least effect.

Tōsaku. This one being a holy-woman of Kompira San's, she's a most powerful one. Since the god enters into her, her's are different from the prayers of hermit priests. How would it be to try

her?

Gisuke. I wonder. About what'll it cost, I wonder.

Tōsaku. If he doesn't get well, she says she wants nothing. If he does, she says to pay according to your means.

Gisuke. Suejirō says there's nothing in such things as prayers, but since I can't lose anything by it, I might as well try her anyway, mightn't I?

[*At this point KICHIJİ comes in with a ladder. He goes inside the bamboo fence.*]

Tōsaku. Then I'll go and get the holy-woman from Kinkichi's where she's stopping. Get the young master down.

Gisuke. Thanks for your trouble. Then please bespeak her well. [*After watching TŌSAKU depart.*] Come on, Yoshi! Come on down quietly.

Kichiji [*crawling up on the roof*]. Come on, young master. Let's go down together. If you stay in a place like this, you'll have a bad fever in the night.

Yoshitarō [*like a Buddhist disciple in dread of an approaching heretic*]. I don't want to. The goblins are all beckoning me to come. This is no place for you to come. What are you thinking of?

Kichiji. Come on, don't talk nonsense, but come down.

Yoshitarō. If you but barely touch me, the

goblins will rend you to pieces.

Kichiji [*goes suddenly up to YOSHITARŌ and seizing him by the shoulder, pulls him down. After being seized, YOSHITARŌ offers no resistance at all.*] Come, if you behave badly, you'll hurt yourself.

Gisuke. Be careful.

Kichiji [*comes down with YOSHITARŌ in front of him. YOSHITARŌ limps because of an injury to his right leg*]. Though called holy-women, there are some who do not the least bit of good.

Gisuke. Yoshi often says he talks with the god of Kompira. So I thought a holy-woman from there might have some effect. [*Raising his voice loud.*] Oyoshi, come out here a little.

Oyoshi [*inside*]. Is there something?

Gisuke. I've sent for a holy-woman. What do you think?

Oyoshi [*comes out at the swinging door*]. It might be all right. Through something or other, he might just chance to get well.

Yoshitarō [*with a discontented look*]. Father, why did you get me down? Just now when a five-colored cloud was descending to meet me?

Gisuke. Fool! Didn't you once say your five-colored cloud had come and jump off the roof? That's how you got crippled like that. Today a holy-woman from Kompira will come, and she's going to drive out the thing that's possessed you, so

don't climb up on the roof, but wait.

[*At this juncture TÔSAKU comes in with the Holy-woman. She is a witchlike hag of about fifty with a crafty face.*]

Tôsku. Master, this is the holy-woman I told you of a while ago.

Gisuke. Good day to you. It's good of you to come. Really he's a troublesome fellow, you see. He's the crying shame of his parents and brother.

Holy-woman [*easily*]. It's nothing, my good sir. Don't worry, I'll cure him straight off through the power and virtue of my god. [*Turning toward YOSHITARÔ.*] Is it this gentleman?

Gisuke. Yes. He's twenty-four now, you see. But he can't do a single thing decently but climb up on high places.

Holy-woman. How long has he suffered with this affliction?

Gisuke. He was born with it. He wanted to climb up on to things from the time he was a little mite and when he was four or five climbed up into the alcove and on to the household shrine and on to shelves. When he was seven or eight, he learned to climb trees. When he was fifteen or sixteen he would climb to the tops of mountains and not come down all day. And he would talk continually to himself as if he was talking to goblins or gods or such things. What on earth could be the reason?

Holy-woman. Like the rest, he's surely possessed by a fox. Come, I'll pray over him. [*Walking toward YOSHITARŌ.*] Hear me well! Since I'm the messenger of the god of this land, Kompira Daigongen Sama, every word I say is spoken by him.

Yoshitarō [*looking displeased*]. You talk of the god of Kompira, but have you ever seen him?

Holy-woman [*glaring at him*]. What rudeness you talk! Is it possible to see the god's form with the eyes?

Yoshitarō [*proudly*]. I've seen him many times. Kompira San is an old man in a white robe with a golden crown on his head. He's my close friend.

Holy-woman [*looking at GISUKE a little disconcerted at being put down*]. This is a most advanced case of fox possession. Come, I'll try calling upon the god.

[*Chanting a magic formula, the Holy-woman makes mysterious motions with her body, while YOSHITARŌ, still held by the shoulder by KICHIJI, looks on indifferently like one who has no connection with the business. After raving about like one in a frenzy, she falls in a swoon. Getting up again, she stares all about her with wide-open eyes.*]

Holy-woman [*in an utterly different voice*]. I am Kompira Daigongen, the god enthroned at Zōzu

Mountain of this land.

All [*with the exception of YOSHITARŌ, bowing*].
Oh!

Holy-woman [*solemnly*]. The fox of Taka-no-Jō Mountain has entered into and possessed the body of the eldest son of this house. Hang him up to the branch of a tree and smoke him with green pine needles. Act not upon my words and the punishment of the god will strike you instantly. [*Swoons again.*]

All. Oh!

Holy-woman [*rising again, absently*]. What did the god say?

Gisuke. Ah, it was a most august thing.

Holy-woman. If you don't do as the god has commanded, you will be rewarded with his punishment, so I speak that you may know.

Gisuke [*a little troubled*]. Kichiji! Then won't you cut some green pine needles and bring them?

Oyoshi. No matter how much she says it's the order of the god, we can't do such a cruel thing.

Holy-woman. It's the fox in him that'll be smudged and suffer. The man himself will feel no pain. Come, make ready quickly. [*Turning to YOSHITARŌ.*] Did you hear the god's voice? You'd best be gone before you suffer.

Yoshitarō. Kompira San's voice is no such

voice as that. He'd have nothing to do with such a woman as you.

Holy-woman [*her dignity injured*]. Now I'll make you smart, so just wait. You dirty fox, you're a detestable rascal to abuse a god.

[*KICHIJI comes in with an armful of green pine needles. OYOSHI is in a panic.*]

Holy-woman. If you don't reverence the command of the god, his punishment will fall upon you!

[*GISUKE reluctantly helps KICHIJI set fire to the green pine needles and push the protesting YOSHITARŌ up near the smoke.*]

Yoshitarō. Father, what are you doing? Don't! Don't!

Holy-woman. If you think that's the voice of that man, it'll be hard to smudge him. You must think that it's all the voice of the fox talking. You must think that you're hurting the fox that's hurting him.

Oyoshi. Anyway it's cruel.

[*GISUKE helps KICHIJI and they push YOSHITARŌ's face into the smoke. Just then, SUEJIRŌ's voice is heard from the house.*]

Suejirō [*from within the house*]. Father. Mother. I've come home.

Gisuke [*lets go of YOSHITARŌ a little startled*]. Sue's come home. It's not Sunday, and I wonder

why.

[SUEJIRŌ puts his face out at the swinging door. He is a darkish dashing youth dressed in a middle school uniform. He is quickly aware of the extraordinary state of affairs.]

Suejirō. What are you doing, father?

Gisuke [ill at ease]. Er—

Suejirō. What are you doing making a smudge of pine needles?

Yoshitarō [who has been coughing in distress, when he sees his younger brother, as if he has gained a savior]. Is it you, Sue? Father and Kichiji pitched on me and have been smoking me with pine needles.

Suejirō [changing countenance a little]. Father! Are you doing that absurd thing again? Haven't I talked to you about it enough?

Gisuke. Yes, but a god has entered into a marvellous holy-woman, you see,—

Suejirō. Nonsense! Just because brother can't reason, doing such a foolish thing!

[As the Holy-woman looks at him askance, he kicks and scatters the burning pine needles.]

Holy-woman. Wait, that fire's a fire made at the command of a god.

[With a derisive laugh, SUEJIRŌ tramples it out.]

Gisuke [changing his tone a little]. Suejirō! I haven't any education at all, so I listen to every

word you who are bright at school say. But wouldn't it be well not to trample out a fire made at the god's command, no matter how suppositional?

Suejirō. Nothing can be cured by smoking with pine needles. People would laugh if they heard you were driving out a fox. If all the gods in Japan came gathering in, it wouldn't cure a cold. This impostor of a holy-woman, thinking of nothing but money,—

Gisuke. But the doctors can't cure him either.

Suejirō. If the doctors say he can't get well, he can't. What's more, as I've said many times, if brother suffers with this affliction, we must by all means try to cure him, but we can make him happy all day long if we just let him climb to the roof of the house. Not in all Japan, no, not in all the world, is there a man who can be as happy every day as brother can. And suppose you did cure him now and make of him a sane man, what good would it do? He's twenty-four and knows nothing, not even the *i* of his *i-ro-ha*; he's utterly without experience; in addition, he'd be conscious of his own deformity and probably the most unhappy man in Japan. Is that what you want? Nothing could be so foolish as to think that it must be best to make him sane, and give him sanity to torture him. [*Looking at the Holy-woman out of the corner of his eye.*] Tōsaku San, if you brought her here, please

go away with her

Holy-woman [most indignant at the insult]. Who treats profanely his messenger, the god will instantly punish. [*Chanting a magic formula, she goes through the same sort of motions as before and, falling down once, gets up.*] I am the great god of Kompira. What the sick man's brother has just said is all from a selfish heart. For when the elder brother recovers, all the wealth of this house becomes his. Dare not doubt.

Suejirō [knocking her angrily down]. What are you driveling? Fool! [*Kicks her two or three times.*]

Holy-woman [as she gets up, returning to her former self]. Ouch! What are you doing? Don't be wild.

Suejirō. Fake! Impostor!

Tōsaku [separating them]. Come, my boy, wait. You needn't be so angry.

Suejirō [is still excited]. Driveling nonsense! What does an impostor like you know of the love of brothers?

Tōsaku. Come, we'll just go away once. I did wrong to bring you here.

Gisuke [giving money to TōSAKU]. Please, since he's still just a boy, forgive him. He's awfully quick tempered.

Holy-woman. The insolent rascal that kicked

me with his foot just when the god was in me is in danger of death before night.

Suejirō. What are you driveling !

Oyoshi [*holding SUEJIRŌ*]. Be still. [*To the Holy-woman.*] I'm very sorry.

Holy-woman [*going off with TŌSAKU*]. He'll begin to rot from the foot that kicked me. [*Exeunt.*]

Gisuke [*looking at SUEJIRŌ*]. Won't punishment come on you for doing a thing like that ?

Suejirō. No god would enter into such an impostor as that. She drivels absurd lies.

Oyoshi. I thought from the first she was a suspicious character, for if it was a god, would it say such cruel things ?

Gisuke [*with nothing to suggest*]. That's true enough. But anyway, Sue, your brother'll be a burden to you all your life.

Suejirō. Who'll be a burden ? If I succeed, I mean to build a high, high tower on the summit of Taka-no-Jo Mountain and put brother in it.

Gisuke. But where's Yoshitarō gone, I wonder.

Kichiji [*pointing to the roof*]. Up there.

Gisuke [*smiling*]. As usual.

[*During the confusion, YOSHITARŌ seems to have climbed up on the roof before anybody was aware. The four below look up at him and exchange smiles.*]

Suejirō. If it were an ordinary man, there's no

saying how angry he'd be if he was smoked, but brother's forgotten. Brother!

Yoshitarō [*as if there was a special brotherly love even in his insane heart*]. Sue! I asked Kompira San, and he says he doesn't know any such woman.

Suejirō [*smiling*]. Likely enough. He's entered into you rather than into such a woman. [*The golden evening sun breaks through a cloud and floods all the roof with light.*] A beautiful sunset, isn't it?

Yoshitarō [*his face shining with a strange brightness in the golden light*]. Sue, look. In that cloud over there, you can see a golden palace, can't you? There, you see it, don't you? There, just look at it! Beautiful, isn't it?

Suejirō [*as if he feels a little the sadness of the man who is not crazy*]. Yes, I see, I see. Great, isn't it?

Yoshitarō [*in a state of delight*]. There! Out of the palace comes the voice of the flute I love. A sweet voice, isn't it?

[*The father and mother go into the house and leave the mad elder brother on the roof and the wise younger brother on the ground gazing intently at the golden evening sun.*]

[*Curtain.*]

THE FATHER RETURNS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KURODA KENICHIŌ, aged 28.

SHINJIŌ, his brother, aged 23.

OTANE, their sister, aged 20.

OTAKA, their mother, aged 51.

SOTARŌ, their father.

TIME—*About the fortieth year of Meiji.*

PLACE—*A small town on the seashore in the Nankaidō.*

THE FATHER RETURNS

[Scene—A six-mat room in a modest middle-class home. Up stage stands a chest of drawers with an alarm clock on top of it. Down stage there is an oblong fire-box with steam rising from a kettle. The dining table is set out, and Kenichirō, who seems to have just got into his Japanese clothes after returning from the office, is lounging at his ease and reading a newspaper. Otaka, his mother, is sewing. It is on toward seven in the evening of a day early in October and is dark outside.]

Kenichirō. Mother, where's Otane gone?

Otaka. She's gone out to deliver her sewing.

Kenichirō. Is she still doing sewing? When there's no need for her to work for other people.

Otaka. You're right, but when she gets married, she'll be glad to take along even one extra good kimono, I suppose.

Kenichirō [turning his paper over]. What's come of that offer you spoke of the other day?

Otaka. Tane didn't seem to like the man very well, though they came again and again and were importunate for her.

Kenichirō. It was a good offer, since he had money.

Otaka. But when you've run through ten or

twenty thousand, it's no use to anybody. Even this house had twenty or thirty thousand in bonds and lands when I came to it, but when your father used it up in debauchery, it was like shaking it off the end of a piece of dwarf bamboo. [KENICHIRO is silent, as if recalling unpleasant memories.] I've learned my lesson, so I want Tane to go to a good man rather than property, for even without wealth, if her husband's heart's good, she can live her whole life without hardship.

Kenichirō. If she could get both wealth and her good man, it'd be better yet, I guess.

Otake. That's out of the question. Be she as pretty as she may, there's no money in the family, while of late, the smallest outfit soon runs up into three hundred or five hundred yen.

Kenichirō. Since on father's account, Otane, too, has had a good hard time of it ever since she was a kid, it's up to us to get her dowry for her anyway. If we had a thousand yen put away in the bank, I'd be for giving her half of it.

Otake. Without that, it'll be enough if you give her three hundred. Then after that, if I get a wife for you, I'll heave a sigh of relief. My luck in husbands was bad, but everybody says it's good in children. When your father went away, I wondered what I'd do, but——

Kenichirō [to change the subject]. Shin's awful-

ly late, isn't he ?

Otake. He's on duty, so he's late. He says he gets a raise again this month.

Kenichirō. Is that so ? Since he was good in middle school, he must be dissatisfied teaching in a primary school, but if he only works hard, he can make anything he likes of himself.

Otake. I've had somebody searching for a wife for you, but there are no good ones. Sonoda's girl would do, but since his standing's a little higher than ours, he might not let us have her, you see.

Kenichirō. Two or three years later'll do all right, won't it ?

Otake. But if we marry Otane off, you positively must get married. If you did marry, we'd have everything fixed up. When your father ran away, I embraced my three children and wondered what I'd do, but——

Kenichirō. It's no use talking about the past now.

[*The lattice door at the front of the house opens and SHINJIRO comes in. He is a primary school teacher, still a mere boy, and of surpassingly fine features.*]

Shinjiro. I'm back.

Otake. Welcome home.

Kenichirō. Aren't you frightfully late ?

Shinjiro. Today I had so many things to look

up that I didn't know what to do. Ah, my shoulders ache.

Otake. We've been waiting supper on you for some time.

Kenichirō. You'd better go for your bath after you've eaten.

Shinjiro [*as he changes into his Japanese clothes*]. Mother, where's Otane?

Otake. She's gone out with her sewing.

Shinjiro [*as he relaxes in his Japanese clothes*]. Brother. Today I heard a strange story. Principal Sugita says he met a man in Furushin-machi who looks a lot like father.

Otake and Kenichirō. H'm.

Shinjiro. Sugita San says that, as he was walking past that row of inns in Furushin-machi, there was an old man of about sixty going along in front of him. When he took a good look at him, he felt quite sure he'd seen him before, so he went near and, taking in his profile, found that he looked like father. "My, but he looks like Sotarō San; if it's he, he ought to have a mole on his right cheek, so if there's a mole, I'll speak," he thought, but, as he drew near, the man slunk down the side street by the Sujin shrine.

Otake. Sugita San was your father's boyhood friend and took spear exercises with him, so he'd not be likely to mistake him, but, you see, it's been

twenty years now.

Shinjiro. So Sugita San said. "Anyway," he said, "it's been twenty years since I've seen him, so I can't say for sure, but since I ran with him from the time he was a youngster, I don't believe I was altogether mistaken."

Kenichiro [*looking uneasy*]. Then Sugita San didn't say anything to him, eh?

Shinjiro. He meant to speak if there was a mole.

Otake. Well, Sugita San was probably mistaken. If he came back to the same town, he'd surely come to the house where he was born.

Kenichiro. But father couldn't exactly cross our threshold, could he?

Otake. I thought he was dead and gone, for it's been twenty years since he went away.

Shinjiro. They say there was a man who met him in Okayama once, don't they?

Otake. That, too, was ten years ago. When the Kubo boy, Chuta San, went to Okayama, your father was going about exhibiting an animal show of lions and tigers, and he invited Chuta San to a restaurant and gave him a dinner and asked him about things here at home. At that time he sported a gold watch in his sash, was dressed entirely in silk and was in remarkably high spirits. Since then I haven't heard a word of him, and that was the year

after the war, so it was twelve or thirteen years ago.

Shinjirō. Father was greatly changed, wasn't he?

Otake. From his youth, he wouldn't take up the studies of his family, but liked things like speculation. That he borrowed money like that was not due entirely to his profligacy, but he had a project to go to China selling Senkin lozenges and failed.

Kenichirō [*with a rather unhappy expression*]. Mother, let's eat.

Otake. Yes, to be sure, to be sure. It just slipped my mind. [*Gets up and goes to the kitchen, then speaks from within.*] Sugita San's seeing him's surely some mistake. If he were alive, since he'd be old now, he'd surely send me at least a postcard.

Kenichirō [*somewhat seriously*]. When was it Sugita San saw that man?

Shinjirō. Last night at about nine.

Kenichirō. How was he dressed?

Shinjirō. Not too well, he says. He had no outer coat.

Kenichirō. Is that so?

Shinjirō. How'd the father look that you remember?

Kenichirō. I don't remember him.

Shinjirō. That can't be true. You were eight.

Even I remember him hazily.

Kenichirō. I don't. I used to, but I set myself with all my might to forget him.

Shinjirō. Sugita San talks a lot about father. He says father was a fine man in his youth.

Otake [*coming in from the kitchen with food*]. Yes, everybody knew your father for a fine man, and they say when he was page to the feudal lord, a court lady put a love poem in a chopstick box and sent it to him.

Shinjirō. I wonder why she sent a chopstick box. [*Laughs.*]

Otake. He was born in the year of the ox, so he's fifty-eight this year. If he'd remained quietly at home, he'd be in easy retirement now. [*They begin to eat.*] Tane ought to be getting back now. It's grown quite cold, hasn't it?

Shinjirō. Mother, a shrike was crying in the aphananthe tree at Joganji to-day. It's autumn already. Brother, after all, I'm going in for a certificate in English. There's no good teacher in mathematics.

Kenichirō. That's all right, I guess. Will you go to Mr. Erickson's after all?

Shinjirō. I'm thinking of it, for missionaries don't ask pay.

Kenichirō. That's right; anyway, you'll work with all your might, won't you? You'll study hard

to show that you can make a man of yourself without a father's help, won't you? I meant to be a first-class civil servant myself, but the regulations were revised, and if a man doesn't graduate from a middle school, he can't get in, so I've resigned myself to my fate. You've graduated from a middle school, so you'll work with all your might, won't you?

[*At this moment, the lattice door opens and OTANE comes in. She has a light complexion and is above the average in looks.*]

Otane. I'm back.

Otake. Come, eat your supper.

Otane [*sitting down and looking a little uneasy*]. Brother, just now as I was coming home, listen. There was an old man across the street from the house looking intently at our front door. [*The other three look disturbed.*]

Kenichirō. H'm.

Shinjiro. What sort of a man?

Otane. It was dark and I don't know, but he was tall.

[SHINJIRO *gets up, goes into the next room and looks out of the window.*]

Kenichirō. Is there anybody there?

Shinjiro. No, nobody.

[*The two brothers and the sister fall silent.*]

Otake. It was the third day after the Feast of the Dead that he went away.

Kenichirō. Mother, don't talk about the past any more.

Otaka. When I was young, I felt resentment toward him, too, but as one grows older, somehow one's heart becomes weaker.

[They eat in silence. Suddenly the front door flies open, and the faces of both KENICHIRO and his mother show that they have received the greatest of shocks, but the content of the shock received by each is markedly different from that received by the other.]

A Man's Voice. Excuse me!

Otane. Yes! *[But she makes no move to get up.]*

The Man's Voice. Isn't Otaka there?

Otaka. Yes! *[Goes to the front door as if sucked toward it, and there follows only the sound of voices.]*

The Man's Voice. Is it you, Otaka?

Otaka's Voice. Goodness! Is it you? How you've changed!

[Both voices become tearful.]

The Man's Voice. I declare! I'm glad you're well. The children must be big now.

Otaka's Voice. They're big indeed; they're all splendid grown folks now. Please come in and see them.

The Man's Voice. Is it all right?

Otaka's Voice. Of course.

[SOTARŌ, the father, home after twenty years, and looking emaciated, comes into the room led by his old wife. SHINJIRŌ and OTANE fasten their blinking eyes on him.]

Shinjiro. Is this father? I'm Shinjiro.

Sotarō. You've grown into a fine man, haven't you? When I left you, you hadn't stood up firmly on your feet yet, but—

Otane. Father, I'm Tane.

Sotarō. I heard there was a girl, but you're a good looking lassie.

Otaka. Husband, where shall I begin? The children have grown so big like this, and that's the finest thing in the world to me.

Sotarō. They say even without parents, children grow up, and they say well. [*Laughs.*]

[*But nobody moves to laugh with him.* KEN-ICHIRŌ, still resting against the table, looks down and says nothing.]

Otaka. Husband. Both Ken and Shin are clever children. Ken became an ordinary civil servant when he was twenty and Shin never fell lower than third in his class during all his middle school course. Now together they're bringing in sixty yen and Otane herself, being pretty like this, is asked for by a good family.

Sotarō. That's fine. Up to four or five years

ago, I was always traveling around at the head of a company of twenty or thirty strolling players. But my show tent burned to the ground in Kure and I suffered a great loss. After that everything I did went wrong, and meanwhile I grew old. The place where my wife and child were pulled at my heart and I came back restlessly. Since I haven't long to live, I throw myself on the kindness of all of you. [*Looking steadily at KENICHIRO.*] Come, Kenichirō. Won't you give me a cup of that *sake*; your father hasn't had any good *sake* to drink of late. H'm, you're the only one whose face is recognizable.

[KENICHIRO *does not respond.*]

Otake. Come, Ken, with your father speaking to you like that. Come, when father and son meet after a long separation, it's a time for celebration.

[KENICHIRO *does not respond.*]

Sotarō. Then, Shinjirō, you give me a cup.

Shinjirō. Certainly. [*Takes up a cup and is about to hand it to his father.*]

Kenichirō [*firmly*]. Stop. There's no call for that.

Otake. What are you saying, Ken?

[*The father looks at KENICHIRO with flaming eyes. Both SHINJIRO and OTANE look down and sit in silence.*]

Kenichirō [*proudly*]. We have no father. Could we have such a thing?

Sotarō [*controlling his anger*]. What did you say!

Kenichirō [*a little frigidly*]. If we'd had a father, we wouldn't have had to jump hand in hand with mother from the harbor works when I was eight. At that time we were saved only because she mistook and jumped us into shallow water. If we'd had a father, I'd not have had to work as an errand boy from the time I was ten. Since we had no father, we grew up as children with no joy in our lives. Shinjirō, do you forget how you cried when you were in primary school, because you couldn't buy paper and ink? Do you forget how you cried when you couldn't buy lesson books enough and your companions made fun of you because you went to school with books copied out by hand? Could we have a father? If we'd had one, we'd have had no such trouble.

[OTAKA and OTANE weep, SHINJIRŌ is moist-eyed, and the old father is beginning to turn from anger to grief.]

Shinjirō. But, brother, first of all, since mother's reconciled like that, wouldn't it be best to let bygones be bygones?

Kenichirō [*still icily*]. Since mother's a woman, I don't know what she thinks, but if I have a father, he's my enemy. When we were little, if in our hunger and pain we complained to mother,

she always said, "It's all your father's fault; if you must blame, blame your father." If I have a father, he's the enemy who's tortured me to his heart's content since the days of my youth. From the time I was ten, I worked as errand boy at the prefectural building, and mother made match boxes, and have you forgotten how sometimes when she had no boxes to make for a month, the four of us had to give up our noonday meals? My working with all my might has all been because I wanted to avenge that, because I wanted to have it on the man that cast us off and deserted us. I wanted to give him to understand that I could make a man of myself even if I was deserted by my father. I haven't the slightest recollection of any love for me from my father; up to the time I was eight he was always roaming about drinking. In the end he contracted dishonorable debts and ran away with a mistress. His love for his wife and three children together was not equal to his love for that woman. No, after my father disappeared, even my passbook, good for sixteen yen in deposits, which mother had been keeping for me, was gone.

Shinjiro [*choking back his tears*]. But, brother, father's like that now, like that, he's grown old, so—

Kenichiro. *Shinjiro*! You use that empty word "father" a lot, don't you? Just because a

total stranger casually drops in and says he's our parent, is it possible to feel for him as one would for a father?

Shinjirō. But, brother, for children of his very flesh, no matter what sort of parent he is, to take care of him—

Kenichirō. Do you mean it's our duty, when, after enjoying himself to the full, he comes home and says he's grown old and can't work? No matter what you say, I have no father.

Sotarō [speaks angrily, but his anger is for effect and has no power in it]. Kenichirō! You say all that against the parent who gave you birth, do you?

Kenichirō. The parent who gave me birth? The Kenichirō you gave birth to died at the harbor works twenty years ago; you threw away your rights as a parent twenty years ago. The man I am today is the man I made myself; I depended on nobody on earth.

[All fall silent, and the sobbing of OTAKA and OTANE is the only sound heard.]

Sotarō. All right, I'll go. I'm a man who's handled twenty or thirty thousand yen myself. No matter how low I've fallen in the world, I can make enough to eat. I've made a nuisance of myself. *[Starts to go dejectedly.]*

Shinjirō. Hold on, wait. If brother won't,

I'll take care of you somehow, but brother himself, since you're father and son, will soon get over this, I think. Wait. For I'll take care of you in spite of everything.

Kenichirō. Shinjirō! Have you ever received any sort of help from that man? I've barely had a blow or two from him, but you've never had so much as a particle of dust. Who paid your monthly fee at primary school? Who raised you? Do you forget that I paid it out of my slim little errand boy wages? Your real father, and Tane's, is I. I'm the one that performed the duties of a father. Take care of that man if you want to. If you do, I'll never speak to you again.

Shinjirō. But—

Kenichirō. If you don't like it, you can get along out with him.

[*The two women go on crying. SHINJIRO is silent.*]

Kenichirō. I suffered because I had no father, so thinking to save my brother and sister from such suffering, I underwent hardships, not sleeping nights, and got them both through middle school.

Sotarō [weakly]. Don't say anything more. If I came back, I'd probably be a nuisance. I needn't force myself on the support of my children. I have wit enough to take care of myself. Well, I'm going, Otaka! Take care of yourself. That

you were deserted by me was rather your good luck.

Shinjirō [*following his retiring father*]. Have you any money? You haven't had any supper yet, have you?

Sotarō [*with an appealing look in his eyes*]. It's all right, it's all right.

[*As he goes to step down to the front door, he stumbles and sits on the step.*]

Otake. Oh, take care!

Shinjirō [*putting his arms around his father and bracing him up*]. Have you any place to go to now?

Sotarō [*sitting utterly despondent*]. To die by the roadside, a man doesn't need a house. [*As if to himself.*] I had no right to walk into this house, but when I got old and weak, my feet naturally turned toward the old town, you see. This is the third day since I came into this street. When night fell, every evening I stood in front of the house, but I was ashamed and couldn't come in,—and, after all, it would have been better if I never had. When a man comes home without a brass cash, anybody would treat him like a fool. When I got into my fifties, the old home province grew dear to me, and though I had meant to pile up a thousand or two and come back with it and beg forgiveness, when I got old, I couldn't make it. [*Getting up*

with difficulty.] Oh, it's all right. I can take care of my own carcass anyway. [*Stands up tottering and, after looking back and taking one glance at his aged wife, opens the door and goes out. When he has gone, the four left behind say nothing for a moment.*]

Otaka [*appealingly*]. Kenichirō!

Otane. Brother!

[*A tense moment passes.*]

Kenichirō. Shin! Go out and call father back.

[SHINJIRŌ *flies out of the door. The three wait in extreme tenseness. SHINJIRŌ comes back looking a little pale.*]

Shinjiro. I looked for him down the road to the south, but he was nowhere to be seen; now I'm going to search to the north, so please come with me, brother.

Kenichirō [*alarmed*]. Nowhere to be seen! That's impossible!

[*The two brothers rush out madly.*]

[*Curtain.*]

THE MIRACLE

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

SHUKAN, a young shave-pate.

OBEN, a girl.

Kō	}	young priests.
OTSU		
HEI		
TEI		

TIME—*Unfixed.*

PLACE—*The hilly suburbs of a great metropolis.*

THE MIRACLE

[Scene—The interior of the Hall of Emma in the grounds of a big temple. Night. The moon's pale light dimly outlines the vast figure of Emma, Lord of Hell. From the distance comes the sound of a flute mingled with the confused noise of the great city.]

SHUKAN, a handsome young priestling who looks as if he has risen to his present position from that of a page comes in stealthily through a door at the right and looks all about him.]

Shukan. Shucks! Oben Bo isn't here yet, is she? Then I should have read my sutras more carefully. It can't be helped. I guess I'd better keep company with O Emma Sama. [Sits down on the dais beside Emma and drums lightly with his heels on the dado. After a moment, he is surprised by the sound of voices approaching the Hall and stands on tiptoe to see. It is the three young priests, OTSU, HEI and TEI, and SHUKAN, in a flurry, looks for a place to hide and finally conceals himself behind the image of Emma, while they come in through the door at the left.]

Otsu. Do you suppose things'll come off smoothly?

Tei. No fear, since it's Ryōkan doing it.

Hei. If he does fail, we'll have to lie quietly

abed tonight.

Otsu. That's all right at times, too.

Hei. But I promised to go tonight.

Tei. So did I.

Hei. Someya's waiting for me.

Tei. Somebody's waiting for me, too.

Otsu. Somebody's waiting for me, too.

Hei. Then it stands that we must all go.

Otsu. I wonder if that fellow Ryōkan will get away with it.

Tei. No fear, that kid threw away his conscience long ago. He's a boy who considers a conscience a nuisance. He thinks nothing of stealing. He says the world that persecutes thieves is wrong.

Hei. He ought to be getting back about now.

Otsu. The superior, the young priests and the pages are all up yet, so he must be having a pretty hard time of it.

Kō [*the fourth young priest, comes in through the door at the right concealing something in the sleeve of his robe*]. I've had a frightfully hard job of it. [*Takes a gilt Buddha out of his robe and shows it to the other three.*]

Otsu. You got away with it all right, didn't you?

Hei. Didn't the superior get wise?

Tei. Didn't the pages and under-priests catch

on?

Kō. Even if we melt it down, we can have two or three good busts out of it.

Otsu. Would anybody melt it down? It's sure to bring thirty *ryō* as it stands.

Kō. It's the Shimashō again tonight, isn't it? There we can have it all our own way, can't we?

Hei. But let's get back a little earlier tonight. We mustn't be suspected by the superior again as we were last time. He still knows how to work his conscience on other people's conduct.

Tei. Nonsense! Could that fellow do anything to us? For the sake of a woman, he's pawned the Haramitta Sutra written by Kōbō Daishi Sama himself. If we let that out, he'll not be able to stay in the temple.

Otsu. I'd never heard he went that far.

Tei. That's nothing; lots of women who say they're his nieces in the worldly relation come to see him, and if you think of that, it's queer.

Hei. Then we're rotten all through from the superior down, aren't we?

Tei. It's not only we men. The Buddhas are rotten. The superior himself is breaking the prohibition against women. The priestlings and under-priests think of nothing but pocketing the contributions. We ourselves frequent Miyagaki-machi and Hanajima-machi. The ex-page Shukan

meets Oben Bo secretly. But the august chief god can do nothing. The Buddhas can't punish a single thing. Shukan blows out the holy lamps with the lips he's been kissing with.

Hei. We read our sutras skipping from end to end.

Tei. Men go bad because the Buddhas first go bad.

Kō. No, that's not it. Because men go bad, the Buddhas go bad after them. In the olden days when men were righteous, the very Buddhas were all alive.

Tei. Anyway look at this O Emma Sama. Though we've stolen an image and are about to sell it off, he can't do a thing.

Hei. But he's making a most fearful face, isn't he?

Tei. Just because of that terrible face, there was a time when men feared him. There was a time when men believed in him just because of his golden rays. But the men of today are different; they've gradually got used to his fearful face. They've ceased to think at all of looks alone.

Otsu. That's true. The only people who fear O Emma Sama are the babes on old women's backs. Since men have come to realize that that great body is only a scarecrow to frighten humanity, it's become utterly useless.

Hei. It must be about the seventh hour already; shall we be off? They're probably tired of waiting.

Otsu [*mockingly, as he goes up in front of O Emma Sama on his knees*]. We're men guilty of all the sins of thieving, whoring and lying. O Emma Sama, when we go to Hell, because of our intimacy, be easy on us, I beseech thee. [*Laughs. The others laugh with him, and as he rises, he speaks a little theatrically.*] If we leave a petition like this, we can do any evil thing we like. Come, let's be off. Let's have a drink at some *sake* shop on the way, shan't we?

Kō. Good.

Tei. Then let's be getting started.

Hei. [*chancing to look back at Emma's face as he is about to follow*]. Oh, just now O Emma Sama's eyeballs seemed to glitter.

Kō. *Otsu and Tei* [*a little startled but quickly regaining their composure*]. What nonsense are you talking?

[*HEI stares at Emma in silence.*]

Otsu. Rather than at a *sake* shop, hadn't we better take a quiet drink at the Umegen outside the back gate? There we can pay later.

Kō. That's a good idea.

Hei. Then let's make it the Umegen.

Tei. I don't mind.

Otsu. Come on.

Hei. Come on.

Kō [*suddenly becoming aware of the image in his hand*]. If we go to the Umegen, this fellow'll be a bother.

Otsu. Then we'd better come back again for him. Hide him over yonder somewhere.

Kō. Isn't he likely to be discovered?

Tei. I'll hide him in a good place. All watch! [*Takes the image from Kō and pushes it into Emma's mouth.*] This is a famous piece of hollow sculpture, so there's nothing in its belly. If we put him in here, O Shaka Sama himself isn't likely to know it.

Hei. The actor Yoshizawa Kogenji once read such lines.

Kō. Let's be off.

Tei. Let's go.

Hei. Let's go. [*As he takes two or three steps.*] When you look back a little like this, he has a fearful face after all, hasn't he?

Tei. However fearful his face may be, if he allows us to make game of him like this, it's of no avail. [*Laughs.*]

[*They go out together. The youth, SHUKAN, puts his head out under Emma's arm.*]

Shukan. That's a bad bunch. But I'm not altogether good myself, am I? I'll hide on here till

Oben Bo comes.

[For a moment all is still. The girl, OBEN, fair and charming even in the dark, comes stealthily in through the door at the left. Even this girl looks calmly about her as if not the least bit afraid of Emma. Finally she opens the door at the right a little and looks in towards the main hall.]

Shukan. Oben Chan! *[The girl, frightened, makes to run away.]* It's I. It's Shukan. *[Jumps down to the floor.]*

Oben *[a little wantonly]*. Oh, you frightened me. My, but you're bad; I thought I'd been called to by O Emma Sama.

Shukan. If you take me for O Emma Sama, it's all off. But even I consider myself a better man than he.

Oben. Though your face is more handsome, aren't you worse than O Emma Sama in your disposition to seize and devour those dead of love?

Shukan. Since we've met tonight for the first time in a long while, shan't we stop bandying abuse and talk of our accumulated love? You're absurdly late, aren't you?

Oben. Mother went to the theatre in Kimi-waka-machi and got back awfully late.

Shukan. Anyway I'm delighted you're here.

Oben. Could I not come? You saw the letter I wrapped up with the alms and left yesterday,

didn't you?

Shukan. Won't you give up such risky tricks hereafter?

Oben. It's all right, isn't it? The superior likes you and you handle all the alms. Even if you should be discovered and put out of the temple, wouldn't it only amount to my taking you home and treasuring you?

Shukan. But I wouldn't consent to leave this temple, let me tell you. Some day you'll see this great Chitokuin will be mine.

Oben. Gracious, you're a good-natured one; would anybody take seriously what the superior said to please him when he was a baby page?

Shukan. Wait, Oben Bo. They can't fool this Shukan. I happen to be a shave-pate, to be sure, but the superior is just like a puppet in my hands. Watch me, for I'll soon show you how I'll stir up all Chitokuin even down to the dust under its porches.

Oben. Gracious, if such a man as you becomes its superior, Chitokuin will be in a pretty state.

Shukan. Nonsense! It can't get worse than it is. You saw the wood-cut I sent you the other day, didn't you? The superior amuses himself looking at such things.

Oben. Goodness!

Shukan. You liked it, too, didn't you?

Oben. Of course I did. I carry it next my skin. [*Takes a wood-cut out of her bosom.*] Something about this young lover seems to look like you. Something about the side of his nose and his mouth seems to look like you.

Shukan. This, girl, is Mineshima Tamanosuke of the Yamamura Theatre of Nara, the greatest dandy in the three provinces.

Oben. But I like you much better.

Shukan. That's not unreasonable. I myself, when I was eleven, was bid for by the temple and by Hishigane no Kongō. The temple offered ten *ryō* more for me, so I finally became a shaveling like this. If I myself should put on the hat of a catamite, I'd not be beaten by the thirty-one favorites of this capital themselves.

Oben. You talk valorously, don't you?

Shukan. While I still wore my front lock, I was celebrated even in ditties as Hidenojō of Chitokuin. Even now it's a great shame that I'm set to burning incense powder.

Oben. Then you don't think sincerely of the things of Buddha, do you?

Shukan. Naturally not. To those who pray to the Buddhas only at times, they may appear gracious, but when one takes care of them morning and evening as I do, one finally gets disgusted and wants instead to pound them to pieces. Because

they are just beside him every day, he comes to know abundantly that they're made of wood, and no matter how hard he tries to think differently, he can't find them gracious. Priests are the worst people in the world to make fools of the Buddhas. The superior, without so much as washing his mouth after eating caviar with his *sake*, falls directly to reading the sutras. The young priests go to Hanajima-machi nightly. I'm about the only one that doesn't do anything.

Oben. Aren't you yourself keeping a love tryst here with me like this?

Shukan. Nonsense! My sin's as nothing. Besides his concubine, the superior has any number of women he calls his nieces. When he cleans up the principal image, he treats it just like a piece of wood. He's always complaining that there are no funerals. He says habitually that he wishes the old man at the Naraya would die. That's because that old man's promised a contribution of a thousand *ryō* to have mass read for him forever. When it comes to the young priests, they're twice as bad. Today they stole the treasured sacred image of Seishi Bosatsu and mean to sell it to pay their way at Hanajima-machi. And as for the truth of this, isn't it hidden in O Emma Sama's belly? With things going on like this, the world's fallen on evil days, for the scowl of the King of Hell hasn't the least

effect. [*Going up to Emma and stroking his cheek.*]
You really must brace up. Mustn't you, O Emma Sama?

Oben. I don't like to have you go up to him like that. They say he has a weakness for young men.

Shukan. There's such a story in some reading book or other. But could he make love with such a face? Let's the two of us show him with a vengeance. Shan't we, O Emma Sama? [*Again caresses Emma's face mockingly.*]

Oben. But aren't you the least bit afraid of O Emma Sama?

Shukan. Why?

Oben. I'm not always afraid of him, but when I'm all wrapped up in you and happen to glimpse his face, I sometimes catch my breath.

Shukan. I never do such a thing, positively. We've been on the most intimate terms ever since I was eleven or twelve. Haven't we, O Emma Sama? [*Gives Emma's face another light pat.*] I always brought the cake offerings I'd stolen here and ate them.

Oben. I wonder if O Emma Sama and the Buddhas really have no power to do anything. For they ought to do something to those who steal images.

Shukan. And while they're at it, to the evil

doers who sin with women before their eyes. [*Again pats Emma's face lightly.*]

Oben [*a little seriously*]. Man, you needn't make such a fool of O Emma Sama. Aren't you going too far?

Shukan. What's going too far? When I was little I, too, thought the Buddhas and O Emma Sama great, but watching things all the time, I've come to know that they're utterly powerless. No matter what evil the superior and the young priests do, they can do nothing. Since I thought he was a fake, I once tried spitting in O Emma Sama's face, but not the least punishment fell on me. After that I thought of him as of a piece of wood. That's right, isn't it, Emma? You're nothing but a piece of wood, are you? What do you say? If that's mortifying, won't you do something about it? Come out of it, Emma! Enkō! Enkichi! [*Slaps Emma's face a resounding whack.*]

Oben. Gracious, man! You mustn't do such impious things.

Shukan. Nonsense! To such a thing as this? [*Lifts his foot and kicks Emma in the belly.*]

Oben [*in a rather panicky voice*]. Just now O Emma Sama's eyes seemed to glitter.

Shukan. Fool, could he do such a sensible trick? [*Gives him another kick.*]

Oben. Man, let it go at that; I've somehow

begun to feel nervous. Suppose there should be a hell.

Shukan. Those who work at priestcraft haven't the faintest belief that there's a hell. The building of a Hall of Emma at Chitokuin was due to the superior's being envious at seeing the splendid popularity of the Emma next door at Daijunji on servants' holidays. In the final analysis, he's an instrument for squeezing their savings out of shop-boys. That's right, isn't it, Enkō? [*Gives him another loud kick.*]

Oben. Call it good. It somehow makes me shivery and I shudder. Oh, look! Don't you see how O Emma Sama's eyes are glittering?

Shukan [*finally amused at Oben's fears*]. Nonsense, it's your nerves. You'd better fear the shaggy dog in the side street than such a thing as this. He might bite you on occasion.

Oben. But, man, he looks more fearful than usual.

Shukan. Then maybe he's got a headache from my hitting him too much. No, it's more likely that he's got a belly-ache from having been made to eat Seishi Bosatsu. Shall I take him out? [*Gets up on Emma's dais and putting his hand deep down into Emma's mouth, searches for the image.*] You must be more careful hereafter. Don't let yourself be made a hiding place for stolen goods. With all

this physique, aren't you utterly spiritless? It's not enough for you to simply squeeze their savings out of shop-boys. Hello! He's stuck in his throat and simply won't come out. Here, 'Enkō! Open your mouth wider, won't you?

Oben. Man, O Emma Sama's eyeballs seemed to glitter and move. Let it go at that! There, don't you see how his eyes are shining?

Shukan [to Emma, firmly]. It looks as if you can still frighten women, doesn't it?

Oben [with the most panicky emotion]. Oh, his eyes moved again!

Shukan [still firmly]. Fool! Oh! He simply won't come out. Enkō! Didn't I tell you to open your mouth wider? [Finally takes out the image of Seishi Bosatsu.] They've done a terrible thing, haven't they? Listen, girl, this is the sacred pure gold image of Seishi Bosatsu, a treasure indispensable to Chitokuin.

Oben. You've made such a fool of O Emma Sama that I'm afraid he may curse us in some way.

Shukan. Do you suppose there's any such sensible O Emma Sama as that? But wait! However you look at it, it's damnable that this Seishi Bosatsu should be turned into funds to take those young shavelings to Hanajima-machi. It would be far and away better for this Shukan to hide him somewhere secretly than to let those rascals sell him

off like junk. [*While talking, puts the image into his bosom. Just then the young priests are heard coming back, mildly drunk, singing a ballad. SHUKAN is alarmed.*] Oh, they've come back. Come, Oben Bo! We must hide.

[*They quickly conceal themselves behind Emma. The young priests, Kō, OTSU, HEI and TEI come in.*]

Kō. Ah, I feel fine.

Otsu. If we go now, we'll get there at just the right time.

Hei. It'll be classy to go down Nawate-dōri singing songs.

Kō. And besides, we've got funds to burn. [*To TEI.*] Come, won't you get out the goods?

Tei. Yes, certainly. [*Goes up to Emma and puts his hand into his mouth.*] Hello!

Kō. What's the matter?

Tei. That's strange. I can't find it to save me.

Kō. Get out of the way. Is such an absurd thing possible? [*Takes TEI's place and searches deep.*] That's strange. It's not here at all.

Otsu. It's not likely that anybody's been here, is it?

Hei [*as if a little panic-stricken*]. That's strange. It shouldn't have disappeared during less than an hour, should it?

Kō. [*still searching in Emma's belly*]. It shouldn't have disappeared in this little stomach,

but— [*To TEI.*] You surely put it in, didn't you?

Tei. Surely I did. Didn't you all see me?

Hei [*as if beginning to feel panicky*]. It was the Tsukehimo Emma of Chitokuin that devoured a baby in the olden days.

Kō. What nonsense are you talking? [*While speaking, moves uncomfortably away from Emma.*]

Hei. There, didn't I tell you? I said so from the first. I said that we mustn't on any account be so impious as to touch Seishi Bosatsu. Being the patron god of the archbishop Ryōnen, he's a marvelous holy image, so I said from the first that no matter how degenerate the age might be, we should worshipfully refrain from touching him.

Tei. Look! Look at O Emma Sama's face! He looks horrible. I somehow feel uncomfortable.

Kō. What nonsense are you talking?

Hei. I've somehow fallen a-trembling. Ah, I don't want to stay in a place like this a second. [*Backs off and coming to the door, breaks into precipitate flight.*]

Tei. I'm shuddering, too. Excuse me for going early.

Otsu. Cowards, aren't they? But there's a matter that prevents my staying here like this, too. [*Hesitates, but suddenly takes to flight.*]

Kō. They're all cowards, aren't they? But it doesn't help any for me to stay here alone. [*Follows*

the others in flight.]

[OBEN *crawls out from behind Emma and starts to run away. SHUKAN runs close after her.*]

Shukan. What's there to be afraid of? Those fellows have been easily and completely hoaxed by me.

Oben. Let me go! I'm trembling so I can't stand it. And I've somehow grown afraid to be by your side. [*While speaking, shakes off SHUKAN's hand and runs away.*]

Shukan [left alone]. A pretty collection of fools! [*Breaks out laughing. Then as if a sudden feeling of panic had come to him with the empty echo of his own laughter.*] Somehow I've grown shivery, too. [*Suddenly noticing Emma's face.*] It's a terrible face after all. When I'm left here alone, I begin to tremble. I somehow feel rather uncomfortable. Come, shall I run away, too? [*Starts to hasten off, but suddenly remembers the image of Seishi Bosatsu in his bosom.*] Ah, with such a thing as this on me, I feel all the worse. [*Takes out the image, places it carefully on Emma's knees and takes to precipitate flight. Then Kō, OTSU, HEI and TEI come back.*]

Kō. There, didn't I tell you? Since Oben Bo ran out after us, she'd surely been with that fellow Shukan in the Hall of Emma again. If we catch him, we may be able to find out where Seishi

Bosatsu has gone.

Otsu. You're right. There's nothing to be afraid of in O Emma Sama. [*They go near Emma and see the august and radiant golden image of Seishi Bosatsu sitting calmly on his knees.*]

Kō [*in surprise*]. Ah! he's here.

Otsu. Oh!

Hei. He's here.

Tei. He is.

Hei [*as if struck by an inspiration*]. It's marvellous. He's set up here for worship perfectly. What a holy figure! [Kō, OTSU and TEI stand dumbfounded and silent.]

Hei. He's done this marvellous thing to admonish us for our apostasy. I shall definitely reform. [*Kneels and worships.*]

Tei. It's marvellous. It's marvellous. I, too, mean to give up evil doing. [*Kneels.*]

[Kō and OTSU, half believing and half doubting, follow their example and kneel.]

[*Curtain.*]

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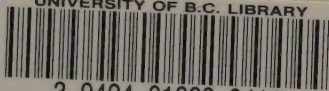
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